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MANUAL
OF
CRIMINAL CLASSES.

OPERATING IN BENGAL

BY

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PREFACE.



THIS book is intended for the instruction of Police Officers in the *modus operandi* of the many distinct classes of habitual criminals who reside in Bengal, or come from other provinces to Bengal for the purpose of committing crime. In a work intended mainly for practical use by Police Officers it has not been considered necessary to deal closely with the origin and ethnology of the classes discussed, and it is hoped that, being confined to matters of practical importance from a police point of view, the book will be more readily read, understood and remembered by Police Officers. Most of the material for this book was collected for me by Mr. W. Thrupp, Assistant Superintendent of Police (for a short time on Special Duty in this connection) and Inspector Sarat Chandra Ghose, from the records of the Criminal Investigation Department. Much of the information has been published from time to time in the "Notes on Criminal Classes" in the Bengal *Criminal Intelligence Gazette*, which have been revised and altered to a form suitable for inclusion in the Manual.

F. C. DALY.

WRITERS' BUILDINGS.

The 21st June 1915.

PART I.



THE PRINCIPAL LOCAL CRIMINAL CLASSES OPERATING IN BENGAL.

CONTENTS.



PART I

	PAGE.
1. Bediyas	1
2. Blumij	3
3. Byadhs	6
4. Bagdis, Podes and Kaoras	8
5. Dhekarus	11
6. Gains	14
7. Lodhas	16
8. Tuntia Musalmans	19
9. Mecca Mowallems	22
10. Chotobhagiya Muchis	24
11. Sandars	27

BEDIYAS OF JESSORE.

THE Bediyas of Jessore are perhaps a relic of the hordes of freebooters that, according to the "Imperial Gazetteer of India,"

Origin.

Volume II, page 494, formed themselves in Bengal from the disbanded Muhammadan troops and the Hindu predatory castes, at the time when the Pindaris were succeeding the Marhattas as bandit terrors in Central India, Bombay and Madras. The hordes that were formed in Bengal were, we are told, soon dispersed by the vigorous rule of Warren Hastings, but doubtless some hung together and kept up their predatory habits with milder methods. The Bediyas themselves say that they originally came from Gujrat, though they have no idea where Gujrat is, and their own dialect contains many Hindustani words and expressions which may be regarded as evidence of western origin.

The term Bediya means a hunter. It is applied by Risley and other authorities to numerous classes in Bengal, Muhammadan and Hindu, including the Sandars and Gains, so it is necessary to explain that the people known to the police as the Bediyas of Jessore are a small tribe of about four hundred adults, now no longer nomadic, but settled in a few villages in the jurisdictions of police-stations Gaighata, Sarsa, Bongaon and Jhikergacha in the Jessore District, and Basirhat in the 24-Parganas. The term Bediya is not used or recognised by the tribe. They call themselves 'Shikaris.'

Application of the name Bediya.

Distribution.

CONTENTS.



PART I

	PAGE.
1. Bediyas	1
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Distribution.

They are nominally Hindus, but up to a few years ago they would take water and sometimes even cooked food from Muhamadans; and Mr. Quarry, Superintendent of Police of Jessore in 1914, points out that, though they are now worshippers of Kali and perform the Sradh ceremony on the 11th day after death, they retain one or two Muhammadan customs, such as Nika marriage. Brahmins will not serve them, and their ceremonies are performed by the elders of the village.

Society and religion.

They have no regular caste occupation, and, according to Mr. Quarry, one member of a family may be a carpenter by profession and his brother a barber. But as a rule the men work as day labourers, while the women and children make mats from the leaves of the date-palm. Though almost the whole community is in a state of extreme poverty, they will not beg, but resort to crime to furnish themselves with a sufficiency of food. Lately there have been signs of slow improvement in their condition. At Doshotina in Jhikergacha, one man has managed to purchase a boat and has commenced to trade in paddy. At Ulasi, in police-station Sarsa, another has obtained employment in the Postal Department.

Occupation.

The Jessore Bediya is a timid person, and violence is no feature of his criminal methods. He has never so far been known to take part in dacoity. Burglary and theft are the forms of crime in which he indulges, and even in these he cannot be regarded as a dangerous criminal, though he shows considerable skill in cutting sindhs, preferably in mat walls. Theft of grain is perhaps the crime in which he most frequently figures. He disposes of stolen property expeditiously, and rarely keeps it in his house. Mr. Quarry states that around every Bediya settlement there are a number of persons who make a very considerable income by acting as receivers, but there are instances of Bediyas conveying stolen property to Calcutta to dispose of it there.

Modus operandi.

The Bediyas commit most of their crime round about their own settlements, but some have convictions in Nadia, Khulna, Hooghly, 24-Parganas and Calcutta. In 1907 a gang of them was traced in the northern suburbs of Calcutta, where they had been committing crime in association with up-country and Calcutta criminals (*vide* Special Supplement to the *Bengal Criminal Intelligence Gazette* dated 20th March 1910). They almost invariably go to Calcutta when they wish to hide from the police of their native districts.

Mr. Quarry furnishes the following examples of the slang used by the Bediyas in conversing on the subject of crime :—

Slang terms used by them.

Sindh = manghee ; Theft = beli ; Police = kakaro ; Hiding = chappoki.

THE BHUMIJ.

Colonel Dalton in his "Ethnology of Bengal" classes the Bhumij, with the Hos and Mundas, as one of the three divisions of the Kol race. Sir H. Risley considered them to be descendants of the Mundas of Chota Nagpur, who migrated to the east, and, coming in contact with the Hindus of Bengal, underwent a considerable change from their original stock as regards language and social and religious customs.

The great bulk of the Bhumij tribe are simple cultivators and labourers, but an upper section, mostly landholders, are gradually affecting to be Rajputs, and spare no efforts to sever their connection with the bulk of their non-Aryan kinsmen of Chota Nagpur.

The tribe permits polygamy, divorce, and re-marriage of widows. They dispose of their dead in a peculiar way, combining both cremation and burial. They first burn the body and then inter the ashes in their own houses.

Social customs.

Their occupation is cultivation, the poorer men among them being day labourers, while their headmen own sufficient land for agricultural purposes.

The Bhumij tribe, on the whole, is not a criminal one, the reputation for criminality belonging only to that portion of the tribe living in the Manbhum district of Bihar and Orissa, and the south-west corner of the Bankura district in Bengal.

In the Midnapore district the tribe is strong, their male population according to the census of 1911 numbering 22,041, but here their criminality has not been marked.* The number of males of the Bhumij tribe in the south-west part of the Bankura district, a tract which until recent years formed part of the Manbhum district, according to the census of 1911, amounted to 9,477. It is in the jurisdiction of the following police-stations that the Bhumij figure most prominently in police records:—Khatra, Raipur, Chatna, and Indpur in Bankura, and Bandwan, Manbazar, Hura, Purulia, Barabazar and Gourangdi in Manbhum.

Colonel Dalton in his “Ethnology of Bengal” says that, in appearance, the Bhumij are inferior to the Hos of Singbhum and to the best of the Mundas of Chota Nagpur. They are of short stature, but strongly built and generally inclined to fleshiness. In complexion they are variable, like the Mundas, ranging from a dark chocolate to a light brown colour.

In the last century the Bhumij of the Jungle Mahals, who were spoken of as *Chuars* (robbers), were a terror to the people of Midnapore, Bankura and Manbhum. In 1798 and 1832, risings of the tribe had to be quelled by military

*The Lodhas of Midnapore, who are classed by Sir H. Risley as a branch of the Bhumij, are enumerated separately and are dealt with in a separate chapter.

force. Their traditional marauding habits were continued, and in 1897 the police discovered the existence of a very formidable gang headed by one Haladhar Bhumij, which had been responsible for much of the violent crime of the Manbhum and Bankura districts between the years 1867 and 1905. In 1898 eighteen members of this gang were bound down under section 110, Criminal Procedure Code. In 1902 eleven more were successfully dealt with under the same section. But the organisation was too large to be easily broken up, and continued to flourish until 1905, when a serious outbreak of dacoity in the districts of Manbhum and Bankura attracted the attention of the newly-formed Criminal Investigation Department. In committing dacoities these Bhumij carried spears, *langis* (axes) and swords, as well as fire-arms, and in almost all cases they treated the inmates of the houses they looted with great cruelty.

Methods of crime.

Generally they opened the attack with a shower of stones, and illuminated their subsequent proceedings with improvised torches. Sometimes they wore masks to conceal their identity.

The Bhumij plan their dacoities carefully beforehand, and collect detailed information through informers. There is no special distinguishing feature in their *modus operandi* beyond the practice, neither invariable nor exclusive, of throwing stones at the commencement of the attack, or to drive off villagers who assemble to oppose them.

As a result of the enquiry started in 1905, two gang cases under section 400, Indian Penal Code, were instituted in Manbhum and Bankura in 1906. The Manbhum gang was proved to have committed 36 dacoities between the years 1892 and 1905. The whole gang numbered 113, of whom 92 were Bhumij. Forty-nine were arrested, of whom six were bound down under section 110, Criminal Procedure Code.

Record of cases.

37 being sent up under section 400, Indian Penal Code. Twenty-five members were convicted and sentenced to various terms, ranging from 7 years' rigorous imprisonment to transportation for life.

In the Bankura case it was ascertained from the confessions of the approvers that between 1893 and 1905 93 persons, 44 of them having previous convictions, had been concerned in 18 dacoities and eight burglaries in the districts of Manbhum, Bankura, Midnapore, Hooghly and Burdwan. Of the 14 men who were sent up under section 400, Indian Penal Code, in this case, 12 were convicted and sentenced to periods of imprisonment ranging from 3 to 7 years' rigorous imprisonment.

Forty-two members of a gang of Bhumij known as Digumber Bhumij's gang have been declared a criminal tribe under Act III of 1911 by the Government of Bihar and Orissa Notification No. 379 P., dated 8th January 1915.

BYADHS OF LOWER BENGAL.

The Byadhs are itinerant low class Hindus, who come from the districts of Jessore, Nadia and 24-Parganas. Their origin is obscure, and there is no mention of them in Risley's "Tribes and Castes of Bengal," nor are they separately treated in the Census. They say that their profession is bird-catching, and that their forefathers used to supply birds to the Nawabs of Murshidabad. It is said that they have adopted their present wandering mode of life only in recent years. They wander from place to place, men, women and children, ostensibly living by weaving and hawking bamboo baskets, etc., and snaring birds with the *satnola*. They generally camp in one place for several months, making friends with, and gaining the confidence of, some of the villagers,

Origin.

Mode of living.



A BYADH AND BYADHINI.



BYADHS.

calling them godfathers or godmothers, and eventually proceed to swindle them in one or other of the ways mentioned below. Men and women are equally expert swindlers.

One of their methods is to persuade their victims

Modus operandi.

they are in possession of a quantity of gold mohurs, which they have found while dismantling an old building. They produce a clod of earth shaped like a *handi*, supposed to contain the gold mohurs, and propose to pawn it to the victim for a sum of money down. If they succeed in getting the money, they disappear promptly. In a case of the Bankura district in 1913, after a gang consisting of four males, three females, and four children,

had camped in a village for several

A typical swindle.

days, one of them persuaded a villager to believe that he had a number of gold mohurs, which he would give in exchange for a promise of support during his lifetime and a payment of Rs. 100 in cash. The villager agreed and followed the Byadh to a solitary field, where he paid the stipulated sum, receiving in exchange a heavy jar with its mouth sealed. On examination it was found to be filled with earth. The victim endeavoured to detain the Byadh, but accomplices appeared from hiding and effected a rescue.

There are cases on record also in which Byadh

females have borrowed ornaments

Lakshmi's Bhar.

from village women, promising to give in exchange *Lakshmi's Bhar*, supposed to be an inexhaustible jar of money. The arrangement is always to deliver the valuable jar on some lonely spot, and it is always just a jar filled with earth, with perhaps a few coins on top.

The Byadhs also practise the doubling trick, and

Doubling trick.

lately have taken to using violence towards victims who, at the last moment, show reluctance to part with their money.

They sometimes try to pass themselves off as Bansphor Doms or Kururias, with whom they have really no connection.

People calling themselves Paikhmaras and Koles may also be Byadhs.

In appearance they resemble ordinary low class Bengalis, and speak with an accent resembling that of the people of Jessore.

Appearance and language.

BAGDIS, PODES AND KAORAS OF BENGAL.

Bagdis, Podes and Kaoras are not necessarily criminal. They are given a place in this Manual, because they generally contribute largely to the constitution of the dacoit gangs in the Burdwan and Presidency Divisions. In the commission of crime all three mix freely with other castes of Hindus and with Muhammadans. Burglary and dacoity are the forms of crime to which they are most addicted. There is no distinctive peculiarity in the *modus operandi* of any of these castes.

Sir Herbert Risley describes the Bagdis as a “cultivating, fishing, and menial caste of Central and Western Bengal,” divided into 11 sub-castes, which are again sub-divided into a number of exogamous sections.

Risley's account of the Bagdis.

A Bagdi must marry within the sub-caste, but outside the section to which he belongs.

Marriage and divorce.

Widow remarriage is permitted, except in one sub-caste known as Tentulia. A wife may be divorced for barrenness, unchastity, or disobedience, a tribunal of elders of the caste deciding such cases.

Sir Herbert Risley wrote of the Bagdis in 1891—

Religion.

“The religion of the Bagdis is a compound of elements borrowed from orthodox Hinduism, and survivals from the mingled

Animism and Nature worship which prevails among the aborigines of Western Bengal. Siva, Bishnu, Mansa, Dharmaraj and Durga are worshipped under the guidance of degraded Brahmans, their priests (*purohits*). On the last day of *Bhadra* (middle of September), the Bagdis carry in procession the effigy of a female saint named Bhadu, the favourite daughter of a former Raja of Pachete, who died a virgin for the good of the people. The worship consists of songs and wild dances, in which men, women and children take part."

Occupation. "At the present day (1891) the Tentulia and Kasakulia Bagdis work as masons and also prepare lime for building purposes. *Dulia* Bagdis carry palanquins or *dulis*. Bagdis, in general, earn their livelihood by fishing, making gunny-bags, weaving cotton, and are also to some extent engaged in agriculture. Large numbers of them work as landlords' day labourers or as nomadic cultivators. Bagdis are frequently met with as *chaukidars*. They are utilized also as *Paiks*, *Sardars*, and *lathials* under zemindars."

Social status. "Bagdis are usually classed with *Bauris* and *Bhuiyas*, as dwellers on the outskirts of Hinduism. By abstaining from beef they consider themselves to be raised above the *Bauri*, *Muchi* and *Oraon*. They eat and drink with the *Mal*, and are generally addicted to *pachui*."

Old police records show the Bagdis of Midnapore, Bankura, Burdwan, Birbhum, Hooghly, and Murshidabad as notorious dacoits and robbers, skilful *lathials*, and experts in scaling walls. They were often engaged by zemindars for acts of violence. A large number were convicted in specific cases of dacoity and robbery, or bound down in bad-livelihood cases arising out of such offences.

At the present time the most actively criminal Bagdis are found in the Diamond Harbour subdivision of the

24-Parganas, Arambagh subdivision in Hooghly, and Sadar subdivision of Burdwan.

Podes are described by Sir Herbert Risley as “a fishing, cultivating, land-holding and trading caste of Lower Bengal, found in large numbers in the 24-Parganas.” Their origin is uncertain. They are divided into four sub-castes: Bagande, Bangla, Khotta or Mana, and Uraiya. The first two are found chiefly in the 24-Parganas and Jessore, the third in Murshidabad and Malda, and the fourth in Midnapore and Balasore.

By religion the Podes are Hindus. They have their own priests, who are a degraded class of Rarhi Brahmans.

At present the Podes, like many other of the lower castes of Hindus, are endeavouring to raise their social status. Some of them have advanced so far as to call themselves “Bratya-Khatrias,” and have assumed the sacred thread. The majority of the caste is illiterate, and the men indulge intemperately in strong liquor and women. They are indifferent cultivators, and rarely engage regularly in any trade or occupation. They make and sell *chira*.

The total number of Podes, according to the Census of 1911, was 274,181 males, of which the 24-Parganas alone had 169,104.

It is in Diamond Harbour subdivision of the 24-Parganas that the Podes have become most notorious as criminals.

They generally co-operate in crime with Bagdis and Kaoras, and sometimes with Muhammadans. In the Mograhat police-station of the Diamond Harbour subdivision, there are at present no less than ten known dacoit gangs, consisting of Podes, Bagdis and Kaoras. In the Mathurapur police-station jurisdiction there are two similar gangs, and in the Kulpi police-station four.

The "Kaoras" are a sub-caste of Haris. They rear pigs and prepare molasses from the juice of the date palm. Many of them are employed as cooks in European and Eurasian families. Their number, according to the Census of 1911, is 56,072 males, 31,904 of whom are found in the 24-Parganas. As with Podes, it is in the Diamond Harbour subdivision of the 24-Parganas that their criminality is most marked, and they are generally associated with Podes and Bagdis and sometimes with Mussalmans. In the Diamond Harbour subdivision the whole caste, both males and females, is notoriously criminal and turbulent. Kaoras are of very low social status, and generally live in dirty and insanitary hamlets on the outskirts of villages.

DHEKARUS.

The Dhekarus are a low class of Hindu Kamars, found in the districts of Birbhum in Bengal and the Santal Parganas in Bihar and Orissa.

Origin and residence.

In the Birbhum district they are found only in certain villages bordering on the Santal Parganas, and similarly in the Santal Parganas they are found only in certain villages near the borders of the Birbhum district.

They live in the following villages in Birbhum—Tobadumra, Kanmore, Haripur, Brela, Kumdira in police-station Rajnagar, Rashpur and Baidayanathpur in police-station Muhammad Bazar, Panchkurthi, and Langulia in police-station Suri.

In the Santal Parganas they live in Khajuri, Mohula, Amladhi, Jalapahar, Kanta, Dangapahar-Chaspara, Mandhara, Dhumadhari, Muridih, Ghusrukatta in the Jamtara subdivision, Muridih, Forakusum, Dolahar, Madhuadih, Patajore, Nadua and Sukjora in the Dumka subdivision.

The origin of the tribe cannot be traced satisfactorily. They say themselves that they originally lived in the Manbhum district, whence they migrated, after the Santal rebellion, to places in the Santal Parganas. They may possibly have some connection with the tribe mentioned in Risley's "Tribes and Castes of Bengal," volume I, page 389, as an unclean low class of Kamars or blacksmiths called Dhokras, found in the Manbhum district and the jungle mehals of Western Midnapore.

The Dhekarus eat fowls, which other Kamars do not.

Manners and customs. They also eat pigs, beef, goats and ducks, but not sheep. Certain vegetables known as *benekumra* and *chichinga* are forbidden

by superstition. They will not take cooked food from the hands of Kalus, Dhobas, Muhammadaus, Santals, Fauris, Haris and Doms. They drink strong liquor and practise polygamy and *sanga* marriage. They do not employ Brahmins as priests, members of their own tribe, officiating at religious ceremonies.

In appearance the Dhekarus differ little from other

low class Hindus of Western Bengal. They are dark-complexioned,

with small sharp eyes, generally clean shaven, with both nostrils bored. They wear two strings of small wooden beads tight round their necks, and some of them adorn their front teeth with gold and silver.

The women generally have four flower pattern tattoo marks on the back of each hand, and invariably one or two such marks on the upper and lower arms. They tattoo their faces also on the chin and between the eyebrows, sometimes extending the pattern down the nose. They wear tight *churis* and twisted *balas* on their arms, and ornaments in their noses.

Their language is Bengali, with an accent peculiar

to the jungle folk of the Santal Parganas. By caste profession they

are blacksmiths, but they work at most forms of

unskilled labour, and some of them earn a livelihood as snake-charmers.

Very few of them have any land or fixed employment. They are most of them bound by debt to the leading men of their villages, who often act as their receivers. The men are by repute professional burglars and thieves, and the women expert pick-pockets and pilferers. They commit crime chiefly in the districts of Birbhum, Burdwan, and Hooghly, and generally work in gangs, which may include men from several villages.

Before starting on an expedition they worship Kali and drink intoxicating liquor. On the occasion of a big *mela*, such as the *Ganga Suan*, the males combine pilgrimage with a criminal expedition, and, without any previous plan of action, commit burglaries and thefts along their way, as opportunity arises.

In house-breaking they do not effect their entrance by *sindhs* or *bagtis*, their profession as blacksmiths giving them a preference for forcing locks and bolts or removing staples. They generally enter two or three houses in the same neighbourhood in one night. They rarely, if ever, carry away heavy articles, and do not, as a rule, use violence. They have a fancy for entering kitchens and feasting on any eatables they can find, carrying off the utensils with them. They steal things of small value, and sometimes defecate in or near a house they have invaded.

The women go out in batches to *hāts* and *melas*, carrying large baskets, and move about in the crowd snatching ornaments from children, picking pockets, or removing money tied up in the corners of women's clothes. They also pilfer from stalls, handling articles under pretence of examining them for purchase, dexterously passing them from hand to hand in the crowd when the shop-keeper's attention is diverted.

In the disposal of stolen property the Dhekaru frequently conceals stolen articles in the water of a tank, or buries them underground in a secluded spot, removing them later in baskets or *bangeys* to his own home, where anything other than cash is disposed of to local receivers. In some cases, these receivers have followed up theiving expeditions in carts, in which they have received and removed the stolen property.

GAINS.

Origin. The word "Gain" or "Gayan" literally means a "singer."

Sir Herbert Risley in his "Tribes and Castes of Bengal" (Part I, page 276) writes:—"Gayan (a singer), a class of Muhammadan believed to have been originally Sandars (*vide* p. 27). They have learned from their teachers the myth that they are descended from Jihad Gayan, who accompanied Shah Jalal in his conquest of Sylhet, and state that they emigrated from that country in covered canoes, differing in build from those used by other *Bediyas*."

There are two classes of Gains: one industrious and well behaved, with settled abodes on land; the other, a race of vagrant watermen, with no ostensible means of livelihood, and addicted to the systematic commission of crime. The men of the latter class, like the Sandar, angle with rod and line to catch fish for their own consumption, while their women hawk fancy articles from village to village, or set out stalls in *hâts* and bazars. They observe no *purdah*, and are regarded by the orthodox as outside the pale of respectable Muhammadanism. The men indulge in liquor, *ganja*, and gambling, and the women are of loose morals.

Social status.

GAINES' BOATS



These vagrant Gains live in boats on the Meghna and its tributaries, in the Tippera district, near villages Bagmara, Dulalpur and Taltally in police-station Homna and Mirpur, and Khoshkandi in police-station Bancharampur, and in the Dacca district near Ramchandradi and Srinagar in police-station Narsingdi, Noadia and Majol in police-station Raipura, and Chengakandi in police-station Baidyabazar. They have no fixed homes on shore. A few possess temporary huts, which they very seldom occupy.

Like Sandars, the Gains are on the move in their boats during the greater part of the year. The photograph facing page 14 shows a typical Gain boat, of which the roofing is the distinctive feature. The Gains dress like other water-side Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal, but the young men sometimes wear *dhoties* and *chadars*, and shave their beards.

The criminal Gains commit dacoity and robbery on the rivers, and their methods are similar in nearly every respect to those of the Sandars. Some Police officers draw no distinction between Gains and Sandars, but enquiries have shown they are distinct, though of similar habits and character.

In their dacoity expedition they use long, fast boats called *sarangas*, and they usually approach their victims in midstream with a request for fire, or cut boats from their moorings when the occupants are asleep, and attack them when they have drifted out.

Their field of operation is confined to the Meghna and Padma rivers, and some of their tributaries, and extends from Bhairab in Mymensingh, through the Dacca District, to Chandpur in Tippera.

Mr. MacLure, as Additional Superintendent of Police of Dacca, in January 1912 wrote about the Gains:—
 “These people are certainly responsible for practically all the river crime on the Meghna river, which is more numerous than appears at first sight, as a large number of cases are never reported.” This is unfortunately the case with all river crime. The victim is robbed on a journey, and decides to suffer in silence rather than incur the additional misfortune of delay, which a police investigation and possible magisterial trial would necessarily involve.

In the Dacca district, in 1900, one Abdul Gaffar, Gain, confessed to five cases of dacoity, of which only one had been reported. In the course of bringing the Gains under the Criminal Tribes Act, Inspector Chandra Kanta Dey traced three unreported cases of dacoity committed by Gains.

In 1914 the criminal Gains were proclaimed under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1911
Declaration under the Criminal Tribes Act. (*vide* Bengal Government Notification No. 910 P., dated 22nd January 1915).

LODHAS.

The Lodhas, classed by Sir Herbert Risley as a branch of the Bhumij, are an aboriginal tribe inhabiting the jungle tracts in the west of the Midnapore district. They still cling to the predatory instincts of their ancestors, who, at the beginning of the last century, overran parts of Midnapore, giving great trouble to the authorities and causing terror to the inhabitants of the villages near the jungle tracts. They were known at that time as *Chuars*, and their raids were called *Chuaris*. They turned out in large numbers for these raids, armed with swords, axes, and other weapons, and carried off any articles they could

lay hands on, using the utmost violence in case of resistance.

The dacoities committed by the Lodhas in recent years seem to have differed little from the old *Chuaris*, except perhaps that there has been less readiness to cause death or injury. During 1902-3, forty-nine Lodhas were sent up for trial on specific charges of dacoity, and all but four were convicted. In 1904, ninety-three were sent up in dacoities, of whom 41 were convicted. The charges against 33 were withdrawn, as it was decided to put them on trial with others in the Midnapore Lodha gang case of 1905 (Section 400, Indian Penal Code). The following extract from the judgment of Mr. Drake Brockman in this case gives an interesting account of the doings of the Lodhas, which led to the institution of the case :—

“From the evidence of the approvers, some of whom have already been convicted of dacoity, and of the victims whose property has been looted, we find that the dacoits numbered altogether nearly 200 persons, and that they attacked in bands of 60 to 70. They carried weapons, and also laterite stones, which lie in abundance in the west of this district. The houses attacked were cleared of all property, the inmates at times receiving injuries, and in

Methods.

two cases the injuries resulted in death. Often more than one house was attacked, and not only houses, but shops on the high road, or boats in the canal. Everything available, including jewellery, articles of food, clothing, cash, utensils, etc., were carried off. The cash was spent, the food consumed, sometimes on the spot, the utensils and clothes some kept and subsequently recovered by the Police—the rest, of any value, sold. The jewellery was easily disposed of among the numerous receivers in the villages around, and of these no less than 15 have been tried and convicted. A portion of the stolen property has been recovered, but it is

a small proportion of that actually taken. The *modus operandi* of the dacoits was in all cases similar: while a few men armed with swords, *lathis* and axes (known as *tangis*) ransacked the premises and were stripping women of their ornaments, a number remained outside and kept at bay all who attempted to approach, by flinging stones with which they had previously provided themselves. The straw of the thatch was pulled down and lighted to aid in the process of discovery. In one instance, some pigeons were caught, plucked and roasted in the presence of the owner. Constant immunity from detection and capture had rendered the dacoits bold and defiant. Attacks were sometimes twice made in the same villages, and even on successive nights. The presence of the Police did not hinder them, for in one case a conflict between the dacoits and police occurred, and, though injuries were received on both sides, none was captured."

During the police operations, which preceded the institution of this gang case, the Lodhas abandoned their huts and took to the jungles, many taking refuge in the Mayurbhanj State, while others escaped to Assam, as tea garden labourers.

The period of the dacoities dealt with in the gang case was from 1900 to 1904. Lodhas live in small huts on the outskirts of the jungles. The dress of the males consists of only a loin cloth, and their hair is usually let to grow in unkempt shocks. The majority of this tribe live in the jurisdiction of thana Naraingarh, but some are to be found in the adjoining thanas of Midnapore, Kharagpur, Danton and Sabang. Their attacks are confined generally to villages within easy reach of the homes of some of the gangs.

The number of Lodhas, according to the Census of 1911, is 3,793 males in Bengal, of whom 3,116 live in Midnapore and 549 in Hooghly, the remainder being scattered over the

other districts, including Calcutta. Mr. R. B. Hughes-Buller, C.I.E., Inspector-General of Police, in his inspection notes on Midnapore in March 1914, writes of the Lodhas as follows: "For years past they have been a thorn in our side, and the following are the approximate figures of the number who are in our list of C class surveilles—Naraingarh thana 105 out of 115, Jhargram 23 out of 47, Kasiari 22 out of 47. There is no doubt that they are frequently hired to commit dacoity, and they are said to have taken to cattle killing also. They like to live in jungles and are excellent workers."

The Lodhas emigrate in small numbers to the tea gardens in Assam, where they are looked upon as good labourers. They must be regarded as one of the many aboriginal tribes, who, having been driven into the jungles by the advance of superior civilization, have been compelled by extreme poverty to rely on the proceeds of crime for their existence.

TUNTIA MUSALMANS.

The term Tuntia is derived from *Tunt* (the mulberry), the cultivation of which formed the chief occupation of this class in the prosperous days of the silk industry. At the present day the Tuntias are capable cultivators, working either on their own land or as hired labourers, and are also found occupied as rope-makers, bullock cart drivers, shop-keepers, fishermen and even masons. A few rely almost entirely on crime for their livelihood, and the sect contains many confirmed criminals, born of criminal parents.

Mr. O'Malley, I.C.S., writing of the Tuntias in the District Gazetteer of Midnapore, remarks:—"As a community they have a bad reputation, and many of them are born thieves"

and dacoits. They are regarded as a degraded class, and other Muhammadans will not give them their daughters in marriage, though they have no objection to receiving Tuntia girls as wives."

Elsewhere, in the same District Gazetteer (1911), Mr. O'Malley writes, "Midnapore has long been notorious for the number of dacoities committed within its borders. These are largely the work of Lodhas, an aboriginal tribe, and of Tuntias, a Muhammadan caste."

The Tuntias reside in the following localities—

In the Midnapore District—in the jurisdictions of police-station Ramjibanpur, Gar-beta, and Khargpur; in the Bankura District—in the jurisdictions of police-stations Sero-monipur, Onda, Taldangra, Indpur, Simlapal, Vishnupur and Jaipur; in the Hooghly District—in the jurisdictions of police-stations Badanganj, Goghat and Arambagh; and a few are found in the jurisdictions of police-station Raina in the Burdwan District, and Belliaghatta in Calcutta.

Their criminal exploits, however, extend to a much wider field, as was shown by the confessions obtained in the case known as Panchu Shaikh's Gang case (Special Report Case No. 44 of 1905, Hooghly District, Section 400, Indian Penal Code, C. I. D. Gang Case No. 48), in which the leader, Panchu Shaikh, confessed to 22 cases of dacoity, extending over the districts of the 24-Parganas, Nadia, Jessore, Burdwan, Midnapore and Hooghly. The gang concerned in this case was a mixed gang, containing Sandis, Bagdis, Muchis, Oriyas, other Hindu castes, as well as Musalmans of other classes. The leader Panchu Shaikh and many of the principals, however, were Tuntias.

In 1904, consequent on a dacoity at Dum-Dum, a case under section 400, Indian Penal Code, was instituted in

the 24-Parganas, which resulted in the conviction of 11 Tuntias, who were members of a mixed gang 46 strong.

In a gang case instituted in Bankura in 1905, twelve persons, all Tuntias, were convicted.

In another gang case instituted in Hooghly District in the same year, a mixed gang of 134 persons was broken up, and 15 Tuntia members were convicted. The confessions in this case showed that the gang had committed dacoities for over 12 years in the districts of the 24-Parganas, Nadia, Jessore, Burdwan, Midnapore and Hooghly.

In a Tuntia dacoity, one of the dacoits generally scales the wall of a courtyard and admits the remainder by opening the outer door. The door of the house is then broken open with a *dhenki* (husking machine), which is used as a battering ram. Many Police officers regard the use of the *dhenki* for breaking open the door as a sure indication that the dacoity is the work of Tuntias, but it would be very unsafe to say that the same method is not employed by other classes, particularly those who have at any time operated with the Tuntias, or that Tuntias use no other method. The *dhenki* is often the nearest suitable implement to hand, and there is certainly no superstition or inviolable custom attached to its use. Torches and *lathis* are carried, but Tuntias do not as a rule use unnecessary violence. They sometimes tie up the inmates of the house attacked, presumably to prevent their escaping and giving an alarm. They remove ornaments from the persons of women and children. They steal all articles of value they can find, with a particular fancy for cash and jewellery. They generally divide the spoil immediately after the occurrence in some secluded spot, and each man disposes of his share to a receiver in his own way.

A gang of Tuntias about to commit a dacoity will generally assemble to eat and drink together in the early

part of the night fixed for a dacoity, but this, too, is not a custom peculiar to Tuntias.

"*Macchi ghono, jal gutao*" (flies are swarming—take up the net) is the cry for retreat usually raised by those on guard outside, when villagers assemble or other danger is indicated during the progress of a dacoity; but this is a common alarm cry of dacoit gangs in the Burdwan and Presidency Divisions, and not peculiar to Tuntias. Should any member of the gang get separated from the main body in a retreat, their whereabouts are indicated by imitating the howling of a jackal. The Tuntias frequently take the precaution of fastening up the doors of the neighbours' houses from outside, to prevent their coming out to render assistance.

Roughly calculated, the Tuntias in 1913 numbered about 6,096 males, 5,899 females, and 8,172 children, altogether 20,167. Of these 281 males and 2 females were proved to have been actively concerned in crime, 77 of them in individual criminal acts, and 206 as members of gangs.

In 1914, on a report submitted by the Criminal Investigation Department, Government proclaimed seven gangs of Tuntias (numbering in all 206 males and 2 females) under sections 3 and 4 of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1911, directing them to report their movements under section 10 of the Act.

BOGUS MECCA MOWALLEMS.

Among the most dangerous criminals of East Bengal are the bogus *hājīs* or Mecca Mowallems, most of them residents of the Dacca district, who tour the Eastern districts exhorting the simple Muhammadan countrymen to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca, or, if they are unable to do so, to pay the expenses of some other pious Moslem, preferably one of themselves, to undertake

Residence and methods.

the journey and perform in Mecca, on their behalf, the acts of piety that are the duty of a true believer who hopes to attain the Moslem paradise.

Many of these criminals come from Baraikhali, Sridharkhola, Pousha, and a few more adjacent villages in the jurisdiction of police-station Nawabganj, district Dacca.

They travel in parties of two to six, setting out four or five months before the *haj*. Though few, if any, of them have ever seen Mecca, they dress up to a good imitation of the appearance of the genuine *haj*. They are clever in disguising their local accent, and sprinkle their religious discourse with many Arabic and Persian words, which enables them to deceive with ease the

ignorant villagers of Bakarganj,
Field of operation. Noakhali, Tipperah, Mymensingh

and Faridpur, in which districts their field of operation generally lies.

When anyone is found ready to accompany them on the pilgrimage, he is instructed

Modus operandi. to bring with him a large sum

of money, rarely less than 300 rupees, and, at the start, is warned of the dangers of the journey and advised to hand his money over to the Mowallems for safe custody. Should he do this, the swindlers will decamp with it at the earliest opportunity. Should he decline, they will not hesitate to resort to violence. On one occasion, during a boat journey, they threw their victim overboard with a pitcher of water tied round his neck and left him, as they thought, drowning, but fortunately he managed to extricate himself and was able to identify his would-be murderers when they were arrested five years later. Instances are on record, too, of the victims being drugged and then thrown overboard.

In 1906 one Hatim Shaikh of Baraikhali, post office Srinagar, district Dacca, confessed that he and four

others had, so they believed, murdered two men who had joined them for a pilgrimage to Mecca, and thrown their bodies overboard on the first night of their boat journey. But one of these victims had not been killed, and had escaped to appear afterwards as a witness in the case. Hatim confessed to a second case, in which he and six confederates had lured two intending pilgrims as far as Chandpur, where they had robbed them of all their belongings.

Whenever these bogus Mowallems have been arrested in the course of their expeditions, long lists have been found on them of persons from whom they have collected money.

They generally carry with them water said to come from 'Zamzam', a sacred well in Mecca, *tabiz*, and other articles said to possess, if retained with firm faith, high potency for the cure of diseases or the bringing of good luck.

The number of these criminals at present on record amounts to 241

Their number.

CHHOTO BHAGIYA MUCHIS.

The Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis are found principally in the districts of Jessore, Nadia, Residence. Murshidabad, Khulna, Pabna, Rajshahi and the 24-Parganas, and in small numbers in the districts of Burdwan and Hooghly.

They are the lower division of the Muchi caste, and are regarded as social inferiors by the upper division, who are known as the Bara Bhagiyas. The division is not very clearly defined, however, and in many districts Muchis, following the customs of the Chhoto Bhagiyas, claim to be Bara Bhagiyas. Both divisions

Social status and religion.

profess to be Hindus, worship Hindu deities, and observe Hindu rites and ceremonies, including cremation and *sradh*. Their barbers and washermen are of their own caste, those of the higher castes refusing to work for them.

Widow marriage is permitted among all Muchis. Wives are divorced for adultery, a divorced wife being permitted to remarry in *nika* form.

Roughly, the following may be taken as points of distinction between Bara and Chhoto Bhagiyas—

<p>Distinction between Chhoto Bhagiyas and Bara Bhagiyas.</p>	<p>The Chhoto Bhagiyas eat the flesh of oxen, pigs, and fowls, which the Bara Bhagiyas do not touch.</p>
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The Bara Bhagiyas have Brahman priests and regular *mantras*, while the Chhoto Bhagiyas have no set forms of prayer, and employ men of their own caste to perform religious rites.

In *nika* marriage, which is common to both divisions, the *nika* wife of a Chhoto Bhagiya wears the *sankha* (conch bangle) and puts vermilion on the head, which customs are not found among the Bara Bhagiyas.

The two divisions do not intermarry, and a Bara Bhagiya will not eat in the house of a Chhoto Bhagiya.

The professional occupations of Chhoto Bhagiyas are flaying cattle, tanning hides, castrating cattle, shoe-making, and general leather work, while the Bara Bhagiyas are cultivators, mat and basket makers and sometimes trade in hides. The Chhoto Bhagiyas are also professional musicians and drummers.

<p>Criminality.</p>	<p>The Chhoto Bhagiyas are notorious as thieves, burglars, and cattle poisoners, and are frequently found taking part in both road and house dacoities, in which form of crime they often associate with Musalmans and other castes.</p>
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They have a slang of their own, which they use in criminal operations.

A favourite method of the Chhoto Bhagiyas is to remove plough-shares from neighbouring yards for use

in forcing open doors and boxes. They also break into shops by cutting the ropes of *jhāmps*.

When committing robbery or dacoity, they arm themselves with *lathis*, which they cut from bamboo clumps on their way.

The weapons they use in crime.

The Muchis of Pasirhat subdivision use a short bamboo club, which is tied over the shoulder and carried under the armpit, being concealed by a *chudar* thrown round the body. Swords and sacrificial knives are also used in their dacoities. Though Muchis will go on foot considerable distances from their homes, 20 or 30 miles, on receiving information of a suitable opportunity, they will as frequently commit dacoities quite close to their own homes. They are rarely, if ever, known to travel by railway for the purpose of committing

Their atrocities.

crime. They torture brutally the inmates of houses they attack, to compel them to make over keys or disclose the whereabouts of valuables. To bind hand and foot or tie persons together and beat them ruthlessly, or to apply burning torches to the face or body are favourite forms of violence with them, and they have been known to soak a man's beard with kerosine oil and set fire to it. In a dacoity committed by Muchis in 1908, a man was wrapped in a blanket soaked with petroleum and burnt to death.

It was found in parts of the 24-Parganas that Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis, themselves living by honest means, were supplying local information to their criminal caste-brethren living in other places. The Chhoto Bhagiya

Cattle-poisoning.

Muchis also poison cattle, the hides of cattle dying in a village being the perquisite of the local Muchi. For this they generally use arsenic wrapped in plantain leaves.

The total number of Muchis in Bengal, according to the census of 1911, is 239,888 males,

Census of 1911.

their number in Nadia and Jessore being the greatest, i.e., 20,116 and 24,389, respectively.

SANDARS.

The Sandars are a nomadic tribe of watermen, found principally in the districts of Pabna, Rajshahi, Bogra, Faridpur, Dacca and Mymensingh. They are low class Muhammadans, and do not associate on terms of equality, or intermarry with the orthodox Muhammadans of the districts in which they are found. Sometimes Sandar women are taken in *nika* marriage by Muhammadans of other classes, but marriage between male Sandars and women of other classes is unknown.

The Sandars follow the doctrines and observances of the Muhammadan religion, and Mallas and Maulvis decide their religious disputes and settle their marriage affairs. They are, however, rarely admitted to prayers in orthodox Muhammadan mosques.

The Sandars are classed in the last Census as Bediyas, which Sir H. Risley has defined as "The generic name of a number of gipsy-like groups, of whom it is difficult to say whether they can properly be described as castes."

The men possess fine physique and daring character. The name Sandar is said to be derived from the word *Sana*, meaning the shuttle of the weaving loom, which the Sandars used to make of bamboo and sell, in the days when the weaving industry flourished in Bengal. On the disappearance of this means of livelihood, the Sandar men apparently sought no honest substitute for it. They pass their days lounging about, playing cards, or indulging in other forms of gambling, sometimes angling with rod and line to catch fish for their own food.

They carry on no trade beyond the hawking of cheap fancy articles, which the more well-to-do Sandar men purchase from the Marwari and Muhammadan shop-keepers

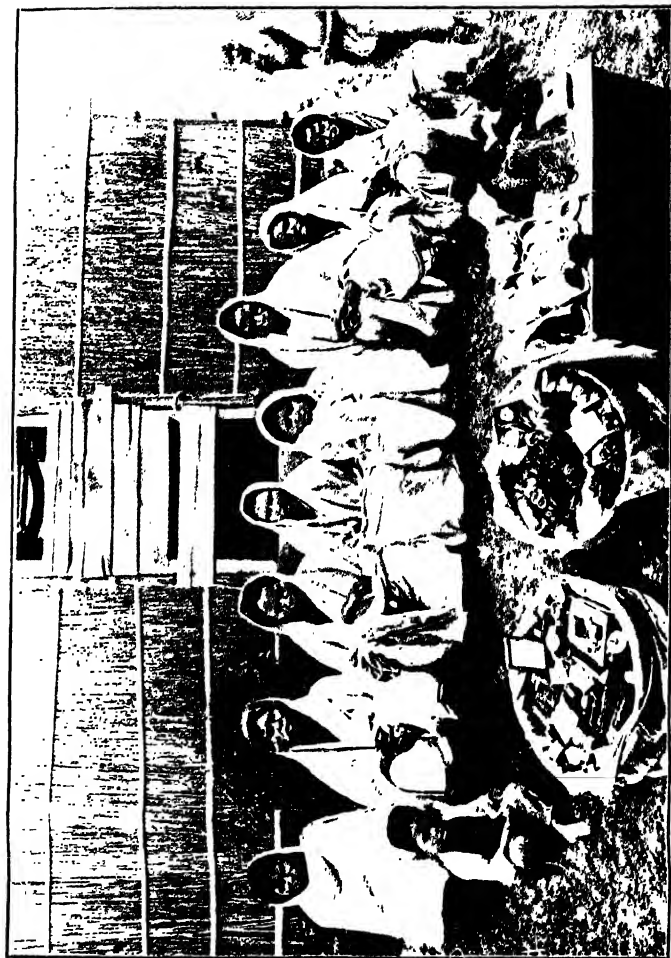
in Murgihata and Burra Bazar, Calcutta, and dispose of to the males of the tribe for the women to hawk from house to house. This hawking is carried on with an ever-open-eye for a chance of theft, or a place promising profits for a burglary or a dacoity. The women are frequently of loose morals, and submit to the advances of men encountered on their rounds as a means of ascertaining where the money and valuables in the house are kept. Lately, some of the males have taken up the hawking business, either accompanying the women or relieving them entirely of the work. This seems to be a step towards putting their women in purdah, with a view to improving their social status among other Muhammadans.

The illustration facing page 28 represents a group of Sandar women with their stock-in-trade.

From April to November the Sandars live on the water. Few have any fixed place of abode. Mr. R. K. Deb, when District Magistrate of Bogra, persuaded some of them to build houses and make settled homes, and a few in other districts have houses on land. But even these keep their boats, and have not abandoned the custom of roving about the rivers during certain months of the year. The great majority of the Sandars live on shore only during the cold weather months, when they sink their boats in the water and build themselves little structures raised a few feet from the ground and roofed with the covering taken from their boats, as illustrated facing page 30. In April they take to the water, travelling in *bohors* (flotillas) consisting of 30 boats or more, but the strength of the flotillas varies from day to day as boats leave or rejoin it. Each family has its own boat, in which men, women and children reside. These boats are of peculiar structure, described by one officer intimate with the Sandars as notable for the torpedo shape of the covering; but this description is not always applicable, as recently Sandars,

Dwelling places.

Their boats.



A GROUP OF SANDAR WOMEN WITH THEIR STOCK-IN-TRADE.

who can afford the luxury, have taken to using corrugated iron covering for their boats.

In addition to the larger boats, every *bohor* has a number of small, fast-travelling boats of the *pansey* type, which are used by the men when they set out on an expedition of crime.

Mr. R. L. Ward, who was the Superintendent of Police of Pabna in 1894, states that nine-tenths of the river dacoities, pure and simple, are committed by Sandars, and by Sandars only, and not mixed with other bad characters." He adds, "There is no mistaking a river dacoity committed by a gang of Sandars. Boats are almost invariably cut adrift or attacked while in motion. There are seldom less than 12 or 14 dacoits (*i.e.*, two *pansey* boats are used with at least six men to work each). There is almost invariably hammering on the cover or roof of the boats. If it comes to blows, great violence is used. It is a rule of the Sandars never to steal anything but cash, and this rule is rarely, if ever, broken."

I am afraid, however, that the distinguishing features mentioned here by Mr. Ward are common to most river dacoits all over Bengal. One rarely, if ever, hears of a boat being attacked at its moorings. The banging on the roof, too, is a common feature of all river dacoity, as is the use of extreme violence when necessary. The device of approaching the victim boat with a request for fire, though not mentioned by Mr. Ward, is used by river pirates all over the Province, including the Sandars.

The Sandar *bohor* usually anchors near the junction of two or three streams. When a dacoity expedition is decided on, a party of men leave the flotilla and proceed in their light boats 10 or 20 miles upstream. They will then commit perhaps two or three river dacoities in quick succession, and row hastily downstream to their *bohor*. They are such excellent oarsmen,

that pursuit by boat is practically hopeless. The proceeds of the dacoities are hidden until the risk of detection is believed to be over. The actual dacoits take three-fourths of the loot, the remaining fourth being divided among the other members of the *bohor*.

Though the Sandar prefers to commit his dacoities on water, he is capable of committing them on land also. In 1891 one Laljan Sandar confessed to being one of a party who had travelled by train, first to Poradah, then up to Rangpur and Cooch Behar, ostensibly to purchase tobacco, but in reality to commit highway dacoity. 6024.

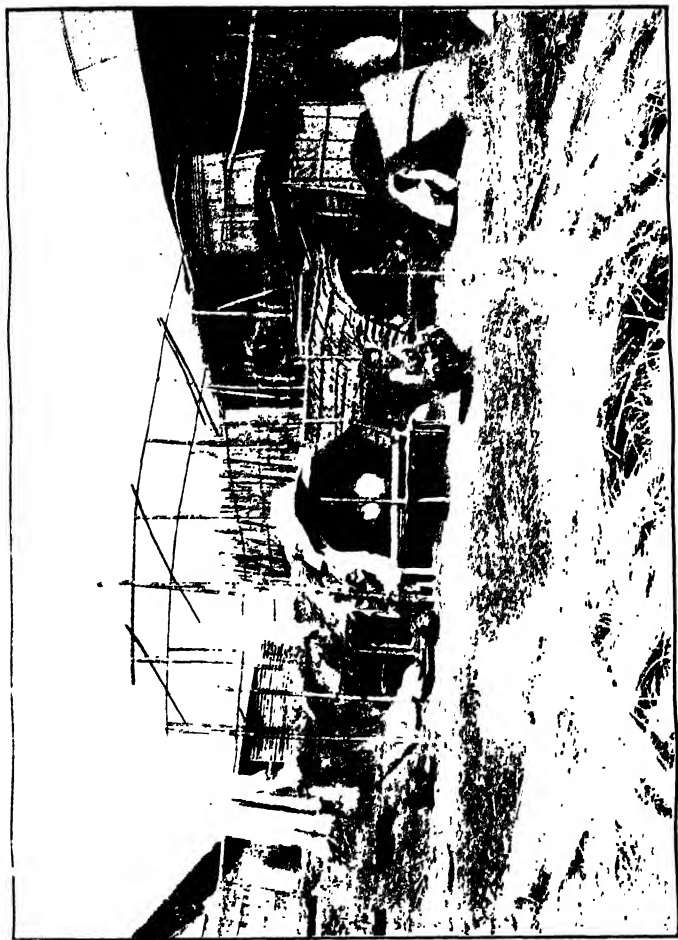
"It must not be supposed," writes Mr. Ward, "that a Sandar prefers robbery with violence to burglary, or quiet theft of cash from a boat. He is a born petty pilferer, and the best and most adventurous of them would sooner sneak a thing than fight for it, and nobody is smarter at cutting the *jhānpa* either of a house or a boat, and quietly removing valuables, than a Sandar, male or female."

The women are never taken out on organised dacoity expeditions, but Mr. Ward says that at river-side burglaries, snatching, and petty pilfering at *melas*, the women are far smarter than the men. They sometimes adopt the methods of the Irani gypsies, the men hustling and getting up a quarrel in a shop, while the women snatch a few valuables and pass them out.

Mr. Ward says that, when the Sandars break through their ordinary rule of not stealing anything but cash, they generally dispose of their property through a class of people known as Rasooas, low class, hereditary Muhammadan silversmiths, who are commonly found in Bogra Sadar, Serajganj and Tangail subdivisions. They are apparently the people referred to by Sir H. Risely

As burglars and thieves.

Their receivers.



TEMPORARY DWELLING PLACES OF SANDARS.



A SANDAR FLOTILLA.

as Rasha Bediyas, a class of very similar status to the Sandars.

In general appearance and dress the Sandars do not differ from other low class Muham. madans of Bengal. They speak Bengali with an accent and a slang of their own.

The field of operations of the Sandars extends to the districts of Dacca, Bakarganj, Faridpur, Dinajpur, Malda, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Bogra, Jalpaiguri, Pabna, Chittagong and Tipperah, as well as the state of Cooch Behar and some districts in the province of Assam. They bear a strong resemblance to Gains, Mirshikaris and Baramasias. In fact, some officers declare that Gains, Mirshikaris and Baramasias are other terms for Sandars; but I am unable, from my own enquiries, to admit the identity, though there is undoubtedly similarity of habit, character, and perhaps origin. The criminality of the Mirshikaris and Baramasias is not sufficiently established to justify their inclusion in this book.

PART II.

**CRIMINAL CLASSES OF OTHER PROVINCES
WHICH OPERATE IN BENGAL.**

CONTENTS.

PART II.

	PAGE.
Baid Musulmans	37
Banfars	40
Barwars	42
Marwari Bauriyas	46
Bhamptas	49
Bhurs	54
Chhattisgarh Chamars	59
Chhapparbands	61
Chain Chamars	64
Dharhis	65
Magahiya Doms	68
Palwar Dusadhs	72
Chakri Dusadhs	76
Jadua Brahmins	77
Karwal Nuts	79
Kepmaris or Inakoravars	84
Mallahs and other river criminals	87
Chain Mallahs	91
Minkas	93
Pasis	95
Muzaffarpur Sonars	98
Sanaurhiyas	102

BAID MUSALMANS.

Baid Musalmans are itinerant swindlers, who come from Jodhpur, Udaipur and other States in Rajputana. They sometimes, though rarely, work alone, more frequently travelling in small parties of two, three or four, rounding up frequently at a given destination.

The origin of these people has not yet been made quite clear. They are Musalmans by religion, but in the locality of their homes are known as Baidas.

According to a note published in the *C. I. D. Gazette* of the United Provinces on 6th August 1910, there is a sub-caste of the Banjaras called Baidas, and it is believed that this swindling fraternity are members of that sub-caste who have been converted to Muhammadanism. The term Baid means a medicine man, and the ostensible profession of the Baid Musalmans is the curing of various diseases. When on

their expeditions they assume the disguise of Hindu Ramanandi *sadhus*, carrying with them a small idol and some sacred books, and, owing to a similarity of appearance, they are sometimes mistaken for Bauriyas. But the Bauriyas are thieves and robbers, while the Baid Musalmans are swindlers. Both the Baidas and Bauriyas assume such names as Balak Das, Sankar Das, Raghubar Das, Hanuman Das.

The *modus operandi* of the Baid Musalmans is in many ways similar to that of the Jadua Brahmins of Patna, but they generally approach their victims in the first instance with an offer to cure free of charge some ailment from which they have ascertained he is suffering. In the course of conversation they lead the dupe to believe they possess

alchemistic power and can turn base metal into silver, silver into gold, and double the quantity of gold placed in their charge. In some cases the dupe is ordered to procure a quantity of mercury, which the Baid places in a crucible over a stove, sprinkling over it a powder or chemical liquid producing a coloured fume. After some further pretence of magic the Baid, by sleight-of-hand, substitutes a lump of genuine silver for the mercury in the pot.

Being impressed by this performance the victim brings all the gold and silver he is possessed of and begs the Baid to operate on it with his magic. After considerable show of reluctance, the Baid agrees and fixes an auspicious day, pending the arrival of which he poses as a Heaven-sent spiritual and secular redeemer of the whole family. He visits the house constantly, reciting selections from the Ramayan and other sacred Hindu books, which he carries with him. On the date fixed the ceremony is commenced, and prolonged, sometimes from day to day, pretence being made of placing all the gold and silver in the pot over the fire, while incantations are uttered and mystic ceremonies performed. One morning the victim finds the good alchemist has vanished, and, on examining the pot which he has hitherto been forbidden to touch, he finds it empty.

The Baid generally select for their victims men of position and wealth, and frequently public servants, as they believe such people are unlikely to complain for fear of ridicule.

When working their swindles on educated persons, they sometimes come to the door begging in the guise of *Bairagis*, and blessing those who give them alms, offer in return some powder or ashes said to possess mysterious alchemestic potency. The dupe inquires about the process, whereupon the Baid offers a demonstration. The victim produces his wealth, and operations proceed as in other cases.

In 1910 a gang of Baid Musalmans, ten in number, was captured by the Howrah Police:

A gang captured in Howrah in 1910.

They were carrying on their swindles from a house they had rented at Nutan Bazar in the Howrah Town. The complainant in one case, after making over all the gold and silver ornaments in his house, grew suspicious and sent intimation to the Sub-Inspector of the Golabari police-station, who arrested the accused as they were leaving the house with the property concealed under their clothes.

In 1914, in the Nadia district, two men named Gobinda

A typical case in Nadia in 1914.

Sing *alias* Gobinda Das and Haridas, came to Meherpur and halted at a *thakurburi*, giving out that they were *sadhus* returning from Puri. The victim they selected was a pleader in straitened circumstances. They offered him a small quantity of white powder, assuring him that it would give him much good luck. A few days later Gobinda Das again visited the house of the pleader, and, by a sleight-of-hand trick, produced a small quantity of silver, claiming to have done so by virtue of his magic powder. The following day he again appeared and asked the pleader to produce all he could of gold, silver and copper, that he might by his mystic powers increase the pleader's wealth. He called for an earthen pitcher, which he fixed on the fire, pretending to place in it the ornaments wrapped in cotton. The pleader was then asked to bring water, and, as soon as he had left the room, Gobinda Das went away, informing the servants he would return a few hours later, and that on no account should anybody touch the pot during his absence. Govinda Das and his companions were arrested several miles off with all the pleader's ornaments in their possession.

The field of operation of the Baid Musalmans appears

Field of operation.

to extend all over India. In Bengal, within the last two or three years, they have been suspected or charged in cases in the

24-Parganas, Pabna, Bogra, Bankura, Murshidabad and Nadia.

BANFARS.

The Banfars, or Banpars, are a sub-caste of Mallahs and Gonrhis, belonging principally to the districts of Monghyr and Patna, in Bihar. By original caste occupation they are boatmen and fishermen, but those residing away from the big rivers till the soil and sometimes engage in trade. They are reckoned as low caste Hindus, and drink intoxicating liquors.

Banfars often leave their homes to work as boatmen in the lower districts of Bengal, and some years ago a regular colony of them was formed in Calcutta and Howrah. Working ostensibly as *mallahs* on Hooghly *dinghis*, they took advantage of every opportunity for theft and pilfering, and soon established a very bad reputation for themselves.

In 1897 eight Banfars were convicted for a serious dacoity committed on the river at Garden Reach, Calcutta. Between 1897 and 1906 Banfars were suspected in a number of river dacoities, and were either convicted in specific cases or called upon to furnish security under section 110, Criminal Procedure Code. In 1906 a series of dacoities occurred at Nawapara, 24-Parganas, Banfars of Golabari, Howrah, being suspected, 15 of them in two batches were bound down under section 110, Criminal Procedure Code. At the end of 1907 two dacoities were committed in Hooghly by Banfars, and Shibu Mallah (Banfar), an absconder, against whom a warrant was out under section 110, Criminal Procedure Code, took part in a land dacoity committed in 1908 by a gang composed mainly of Panjabis, and was arrested. He made a confession, and a mass of corroborative evidence

having been obtained, a gang case under section 400, Indian Penal Code, was instituted successfully against ten prominent members of his gang.

The operations of this gang extended over Calcutta, Howrah, Hooghly and the 24-Parganas, and Shibu confessed also to a dacoity in Nadia. The gang consisted of 50 members, all of whom had convictions or were suspected in one or other of 11 dacoities, which had been committed between 1897 and 1908.

The gang had among its members residents of Monghyr, Patna, Howrah, 24-Parganas, Muzaffarpur, Cawnpur, Fyzabad, and Shahabad, but the majority were Banfars.

We have no definite information as to the extent to which the Banfars operate on the rivers of Eastern Bengal, but it is believed to be large.

In 1905 a Khulna merchant, who had hired a Banfar boat and crew, was attacked on the journey by the manjhi and crew, who flung him overboard and, carrying off the bales of thread and cloth with which he had loaded the boat, travelled back to Colgong in the Bhagalpore district, disposing of the stolen cargo on the way.

Banfars are employed in large numbers as *mallahs* in the green boats, light boats, and *dinghis* plying on the Hooghly. They prowl round cargo boats at night, stealing from them while the crew are asleep. But the confessions, made in the gang case of 1908, shows that their favourite form of crime is river dacoity, varied occasionally by dacoity on land.

Working in gangs of eight to twelve, they attack boats carrying cargo and, using force when necessary, remove the cargo to their own boats. They are not particular what kind of cargo they loot. Ghee, sugar, flour, rice, oil, mangoes, and jute are among the articles known to have been looted by them. They dispose of these goods

without much risk or difficulty, either to regular receivers, or by selling them openly in the market. They adopt the common method of asking for tobacco or fire as an excuse for coming up alongside a boat they intend to rob.

They have also been known to personate Police or Customs officers (Hocghly Special Report 18 of 1908), in which capacity they stop a boat and search it.

They also abet thefts of cargo by dishonest *manjhis*, transferring articles from cargo boats in transit to their own boats, sometimes in midstream. In 1914 five Banfars were caught in the act of removing bales of jute in this way from a big boat, and were sent up under section 411, Indian Penal Code, the *manjhi* under section 407, Indian Penal Code. All were convicted.

BARWARS.

The Barwars of Gonda were proclaimed under the old Criminal Tribes Act of 1884, and again in October 1913. The Barwar tribes and the class commonly known as Barwars of Gonda, Hardoi and Sultanpur districts, were declared to be a criminal tribe under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1911. (See United Provinces Government Notifications No. 1250—VIII-158, dated the 1st October 1913, and No. 1678—VIII-158-17, dated the 26th December 1913.)

The Barwars, according to Crooke, are believed to be a branch of the Kurmis, who separated from the parent stock owing to their bad character, or for some other reason. The tribe is, however, according to the same authority, very much mixed and is divided into several sections, some of which are said to include degenerate Brahmans and Ahirs.



BARWAR.

The term Barwar therefore is not a caste or racial appellation. In Sultanpur, it is said, boys of any caste, from Brahmin to Chamar, are admitted to the tribe. It follows necessarily that there can be nothing distinctive in the personal appearance of the Barwars.

The Barwars of Gonda and Hardoi, and most of those of the Sultanpur district, are inveterate criminals, who roam all over India. They follow the religion of low caste Hindus, drink strong liquor, and eat fish and the flesh of sheep and goats. Some mark their foreheads, wear the sacred thread, and the clothing, beads and other insignia of devout Brahmins. Their criminal operations are carried on at fairs, places of pilgrimage, railway stations, steamer ghâts and bathing ghâts. They pose very cleverly as pilgrims, devotees and Brahmins, and sometimes masquerade as *mahajans*, sepoys and tradesmen, always wearing the appropriate dress the case requires. Ordinarily their costume consists of the *dhoti*, *kurta mirzai*, a cap, and a *chadar* thrown round the body. The *chadar* is used for concealing articles stolen.

Barwars come down to Bengal in large parties, and, selecting a quiet spot for their headquarters, divide up in groups of two or three. They rarely commit crime near the gang's headquarters, but travel great distances in order to avoid suspicion. When arrested, they generally say they are Kurmis. They never admit the existence of any connection or relationship with their confederates.

They will take their seats quietly in the waiting sheds of the railway stations, close to any person whom they consider worth their attention. A favourite method of the Barwars is to mark some article they want to steal, and spread out a newly washed *chadar* to dry, covering with a part of it the article selected. After a few minutes the *chadar* is picked up. the article desired being removed with it. Barwars are skilful at running

train thefts, generally alighting at wayside stations with the luggage of slumbering passengers.

Frequently boys between 7 and 14 years of age travel with the gang. These young criminals are excellently trained, and are often put forward to do the actual thieving for the gang, the idea being that, if the boy is caught the owner of the property will generally let him off with a beating, no suspicion falling on the gang. In stealing from shops, one or two of the gang keep the shop-keeper engaged showing them different articles, while others walk off with anything they can lay hands on.

In their own district the Barwars are said to work as cultivators and day-labourers, while some are fairly well-to-do zamindars. Those who come to Bengal, however, do not appear to attempt any honest means of livelihood, and they are known to the Police of Bengal as inveterate and skilful thieves.

In 1913 a gang of Barwars at Goalundo station had the audacity to carry off from one of the India General steamers a box containing Rs. 4,000 in cash. The actual thieves were arrested on suspicion, walking off with the property before they had got clear of the Goalundo station, and the remainder of the gang, 11 in all, were arrested in the neighbourhood. All but the actual thieves escaped punishment, a misfortune probably due to an ill-judged choice of procedure. In 1914 again, six Hardoi Barwars were arrested at Goalundo, trying a precisely similar theft.

In 1908, in the Dacca district, a gang case was instituted against 23 Barwars under section 401 of the Indian Penal Code. The additional Sessions Judge of Dacca, after a hearing of 19 days, convicted the whole gang, sentencing them to various terms of imprisonment. The following is a history of the institution of this gang case :—

“In 1908 a heavy theft of Government currency notes and jewellery occurred in a running train at Lucknow

Dacca Barwar Gang
case of 1908.

Junction, United Provinces. Some of the stolen notes, which were subsequently presented at the Lahore Paper Currency office, bore the signature of the sub-postmaster of Faridabad post office, Dacca town. This clue was followed up, and a gang of 12 Barwars was discovered at Kandrapara, police-station Keraniganj, district Dacca. They were arrested on suspicion, and from their possession were recovered some Government currency notes and jewellery, which had been stolen in 1908 from a Hindu widow at Jagannathganj steamer ghât in thana Sarisabari, Mymensingh district."

In the same year (1908), six Barwars were arrested at Narainganj, five at Dacca railway station, five at Jamalpur, one at Mymensingh and two at Jagannathganj steamer ghât. Some of them were prosecuted and convicted on specific charges of theft or receiving stolen property, and the rest were bound down under section 109, Criminal Procedure Code, and were sent to jail for one year, as they were unable to furnish security for their good behaviour. The presence of so many Barwars in the Province attracted the attention of the Criminal Investigation Department of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

In the course of the investigation it was found that within a year about Rs. 25,000 in cash and about 200 registered parcels had been despatched by these Barwars from the Faridabad post office, Dacca town, to Bawan branch office in Hardoi district, though the senders had no ostensible means of livelihood. It was proved that all the men arrested at different places used to meet at Faridabad from time to time.

The members of the gang were found to be residents of the same or contiguous villages and were all related.

The surveillance register of the Hardoi district showed that the Barwars arrested in this Province had left home in batches at or about the same time, and had previous convictions for crime against property in almost all the provinces of India.

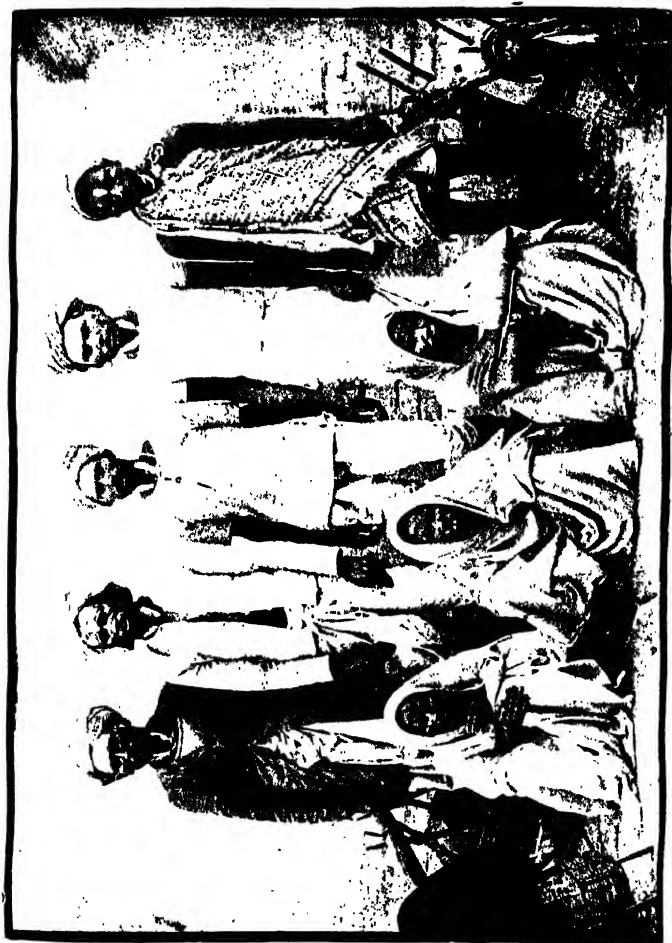
A case under section 401, Indian Penal Code, was instituted against 26 members of the gang. Two of them died in jail before the submission of the charge sheet, and one at the time of the trial, so that 23 were actually proceeded against.

The Barwars are said to have a more complete language of signs than any other thieving fraternity, by which they communicate with one another in crowds, calling for help or signalling to confederates to carry off property. The Barwar women often accompany the men on their expedition and in large gatherings at places of pilgrimage, they attend the shrines richly dressed and rob the worshippers. By adopting the disguise of Brahman women they gain admission to the private apartments of Indian ladies and steal anything they can conveniently remove.

The Barwars are found in Bengal more frequently than any other up-country thieving class, and a careful watch should be kept for them at all crowded railway and steamer stations throughout the year. Hitherto, they have been most frequently found at Goalundo, Narainganj, Jagannathganj, Chandpur, Damukdia, Sara Ghat, Sirajganj, Lalgolaghat, Ranaghat and Kharagpur. They have also been arrested at Bongong and Khulna.

MARWARI BAURIYAS.

In the year 1905 the accidental finding of some counterfeit coins on a site where a gang of wandering vagrants, calling themselves Girs or Gossains, had been encamped, led to the discovery of the presence in Bengal of a large gang of professional coiners, who were found on enquiry to be Bauriyas of Marwar.



TYPICAL GROUP OF MARWARI BAURIYAS.

Mr. C. W. C. Plowden, C.I.E., in a note published in a Special Supplement to the *Bengal Police Gazette* of 3rd August 1906, writes :—

“ There are seven classes of these Marwari

Seven classes.

Bauriyas :—(1) Calot, (2) Parmar,
(3) Ratnor, (4) Dabi, (5) Andnani,

(6) Sangani, (7) Dhingani. They are described in the last census report as a criminal tribe, but the first three confine themselves almost entirely to manufacturing counterfeit coin. Another name for these people

Native place.

is Bagri or Bagaria, and they are all residents of Baroda or Jodhpur.

When questioned, they invariably conceal the fact that they are Bauriyas, but they can be identified easily,

Identifying marks.

as every Bauriya is branded soon after birth with a hot iron, on three places, generally, but not always, near the navel. This is supposed to act as a charm against disease. The scars are large and unmistakable. In addition to these marks, the women can also be identified by five tattoo marks on the face, one on the outer corner of each eye, one on the inner corner of the left eye, one on the left cheek and one on the chin.”

It is a practice among the Marwari Bauriyas, when on their expeditions, for four or five men to assume the same false name, which adds to the difficulty of establishing identity.

Though the Marwari Fauriyas frequently pass themselves off as Brahmans and wear the sacred thread.

Social customs and dress.

they are really low caste Hindus, who drink strong liquor and eat most kinds of animal food, excluding the flesh of pigs and kine. They are generally dark-complexioned, of medium build, and dirty in their habits and dress. The men wear an old *dhoti*, a short shirt or coat, and a *pugri* tied in the Marwari

fashion. The women usually wear the *ghagra* or skirt, always coloured, sometimes a *sari*, bodice, handkerchief, and various ornaments. They speak a dialect of their own, but readily pick up Hindi and other languages in the course of their travels. They generally camp in small tents or temporary huts, but sometimes hire lodgings.

In the Special Supplement to the *Police Gazette* of 3rd August 1906, already quoted above, Mr. Plowden furnishes the following account of their *modus operandi* :—

“A member of the gang, disguised as a Gossain and

Modus operandi. posing as a Brahman, makes a small

purchase and tenders a Faruckkabad rupee in payment. On this being refused, he explains that he is a stranger, and enquires what coins are current in this part of the country. On being shown a rupee, he examines it, and, by sleight-of-hand, passes back to the shop-keeper a counterfeit coin which he has kept concealed in the palm of his hand. In order to divert suspicion, he carries a small stick in the hand in which the counterfeit coin is concealed. In manufacturing the coin, the ordinary clay mould hardened in fire is not used ;

Process of counterfeiting. all that is required are two tin rings, slightly larger in circumference than

an ordinary rupee. Some fine earth is obtained, mixed with lamp oil or ghee, moulded and pressed into the rings and an impression taken of each side of a rupee. The two are then placed together, a small portion of earth is removed from the top of the mould, and the melted ingredients, consisting of solder, copper, tin and bell-metal, are poured into the mould ; after turning the coin out of the mould, the edge is trimmed with a knife, and the edge of a new genuine rupee is pressed round the soft edge of the spurious rupee to produce the milling. This is done by experts, of whom there is always one with each gang. The earth for the moulds

is usually prepared by the women and children. Each mould is used for the manufacture of only a single rupee."

Between 1905 to 1914 Marwari Bauriyas were convicted in the districts of Mymensingh, Barisal, Khulna, Jessore, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Faridpur and Calcutta. Previous to 1905, two gangs had been traced in Bengal, one from Narainganj to Howrah, and the other from Rampur Boalia to Dum-Dum.

In August 1914 there was another case in Birbhum, in which the usual method was followed.

In the event of the arrest of Marwari Bauriyas, Superintendents of Police should communicate direct with the Assistant to the Agent to the Governor-General, Rajputana, Criminal Branch, Mount Abu.

Marwari Bauriyas, wandering or residing in the districts of Ahmednagar, East or West Khandesh, Nasik, Poona, Satara and Sholapur, were declared in Bombay as a criminal tribe by Bombay Government Notification No. 3413, dated the 3rd May 1912.

Declaration under the Criminal Tribes Act.

BHAMPTAS.

The Bhamptas are natives of the Bombay Presidency, residing principally in the districts of Poona, Satara, Sholapur, Ahmadnagar, Nasik, Khandesh, Belgaum and Bijapur. They are not, strictly speaking, a caste community, and admit into their ranks many Hindu castes and even Muhammadans and Parsis. Nevertheless, they have many rules and observances, which must be strictly followed by any outsider admitted to the fraternity. By religion, they are Hindus and worship Kali, whose aid they always invoke before starting on a criminal expedition.

Residence.

Caste and Religion.

Bhamptas should be looked for in crowded places, such as fairs, places of pilgrimage, and important railway stations. They

Places of exploit.

are expert thieves and pick-pockets, specially skilful in assuming disguises, and possess an excellent organisation, which enables the members of a gang to work in close co-operation without raising a suspicion of their con-

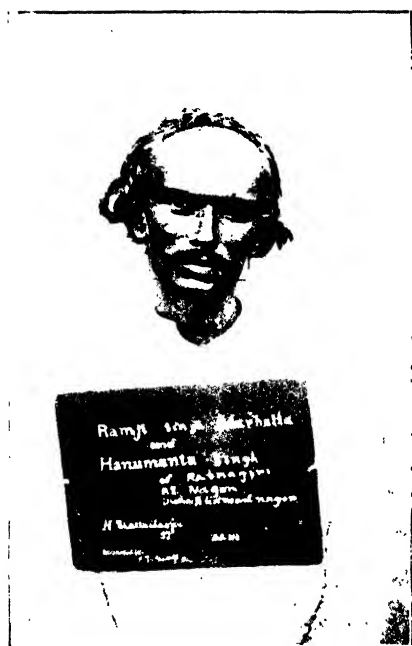
Running train theft.

federacy. But above all, they are masters in the art of running train theft, and in Bengal they devote themselves principally to this form of crime.

They leave their homes in batches of eight to ten, including one or two women and

Modus operandi.

children. On reaching a locality where they propose to operate, the party splits up, having fixed a place for reassembling at an appointed time. In the midst of a crowded town they will put up in *dharmasalas*, or hire a house to serve as a base of operations. Thence members are sent out in turn, and usually travel only by night. They keep a sharp look-out at a railway station, and follow a likely victim to the booking office, and, taking a ticket in the same direction and of the same class, enter the compartment with him. They are cheerful and entertaining conversationalists, and are accepted by fellow passengers as pleasant companions. One of their favourite methods is the following: One of them, expressing a considerate desire to make more room on the seat for others, will lie down on the floor of the compartment, covering himself with a shawl or *chadar*. A confederate, if there is one in the carriage, may place his legs on the opposite seat to further cover the operation. Being thus screened, the Bhampta thief removes a small curved knife from his mouth and proceeds to rip open canvas or leather bags, and sometimes will even force open locked trunks with a chisel, so quietly that his actions arouse no suspicion. Sometimes the stolen property thus obtained is thrown out of the window



A TYPE OF BHAMPRA.

at pre-arranged spots to be picked up by confederates. Bhamptas have been known to throw out even heavy trunks and themselves jump out of running trains.

Mr. E. C. Ryland, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, in describing the operation of a gang of Bhamptas that worked round about Narayanganj in 1905, says that, in one case money was extracted from the middle one of three wooden boxes, lashed together and placed under the seat. One side of the box had been removed, the cash taken out, and the side replaced.

In another case, the hasps of a steel trunk were cut so noiselessly that nobody's attention was attracted. In cases of this kind, the property stolen is sometimes passed through the bars under the benches in third class carriages to confederates in the next compartment.

At the first stop after the theft, the Bhamptas alight and either change compartments, or proceed back by a return train.

They study time-tables, and are well up in knowledge of the trains. If the theft is detected before the Bhampta thief has time to alight, he tries to throw suspicion on passengers, who, he says, alighted at the last stopping station. Should a Bhampta be caught in the act of theft, the confederates sometimes volunteer to hold the prisoner till the complainant finds a policeman or a railway official, or, by jostling the complainant, assist the prisoner to escape. They commit thefts from 1st and 2nd class as well as 3rd and inter-class compartments, and often travel as 2nd class passengers.

Confederates aiding escape of arrested Bhamptas.

Their dexterity as railway thieves.

Mr. Michael Kennedy cites an instance in which a Bhampta "lifted His Excellency the Governor of Bombay's valuable travelling bag from His Excellency's brilliantly lighted saloon on the Southern Mahratta Railway, under the very noses of a strong body of police escorting the train."

In committing thefts at railway stations, Bhamptas use various devices for distracting the attention of a selected victim, and sometimes substitute bundles or bags filled with rubbish for those they remove.

Tools carried by Bhamptas. The following articles are generally carried by Bhampta thieves—

- (1) False keys.
- (2) A sharp knife.
- (3) Needle and thread, with which they resew bags whence they have extracted property, so as to prevent anything from falling and so attracting attention.
- (4) A steel *sorota*, with which they can cut through any ordinary brass or iron hasp.
- (5) A steel chisel, with which they open the lids of boxes.

As a rule, they steal only cash or jewellery, but sometimes take valuable clothes.

Cash is remitted to their homes by money-order or buried till a big haul is made, when the gang takes it home. Jewellery is melted at once, and clothes are sent home by parcel post.

Mr. Paupa Rao Naidu of Madras in his book "The History of Railway thieves," says they carry cheap trinkets, which their females expose for sale as an ostensible means of livelihood.

Besides their native tongue, these men speak Hindi fluently, and many have a smattering of English. They have a private code of signals amongst themselves, 'Tiskopo' being the word of warning. The hand put up to the face and the elbow jerked upwards indicates danger.

There is nothing peculiar about the physical characteristics of Bhamptas. Some are fair, some dark. They are almost invariably well-dressed, and often travel in the guise of

Mahratta traders or railway contractors, consequently they are not easy to mark.

The men are very clever at disguise, and they are usually dressed like Mahrattas in a small *pagri*, *kurta* and *dhoti*, loosely tied. They also sometimes dress like Marwaris and men of the United Provinces, and they have been known to wear European clothes. Some disguise themselves as women, when a female is to be robbed, changing their dress immediately after commission of a theft.

Bhampta women, too, are expert thieves, and commit thefts in female compartments. The women wear Mahratta dress and tattoo their hands and faces profusely.

In Bengal they have carried on their most extensive operations in such places as Ranaghat, Kushtea, Saidpur, Dacca, Howrah, Raniganj, Goalundo and Kharagpur, and the Dacca-Mymensingh Railway, which they worked from Narayanganj.

During the years 1908-10, a gang of about 30 Bhamptas came to Calcutta and took up quarters at 118, Harrison Road, 22, Hope's Lane, Surtibagan, and 3, Kasiram Mullik's Lane, whence they carried on train thieving operations on the East Indian Railway, Bengal-Nagpur Railway and Eastern Bengal State Railway System. It was ascertained at the time of enquiry that during the period of this Calcutta campaign, different members of the gang remitted to their relatives at home more than 200 money-orders, amounting to Rs. 8,000.

The members of this Calcutta gang were dealt with in a gang prosecution under section 401, which was instituted in the district of Satara in 1911. Seventeen were sentenced to transportation for life, two to 7 years' and two to 2 years' rigorous imprisonment.

Following upon this case, another gang case was instituted in Poona, in which 51 Bhamptas were convicted.

The Bhamptas, also known as Uchhlias or Ghanti-chars, residing or wandering in the districts of Ahmednagar, East and West Khandesh, Nasik, Poona, Satara, Sholapur, Dharwar, Belgaum and Bijapur, have been declared as a criminal tribe in the Bombay Presidency, *vide* Bombay Government Notification No. 3413, dated 3rd May 1912, and No. 3691, dated 19th May 1913.

BHURS.

The Bhurs themselves have little to say about their origin.

Crooke believes them to have been a Dravidian race closely allied to the Kols, Cheros, and Seores, who at an early date succumbed to the invading Aryans. "This," he writes "is borne out by their appearance and physique, which closely resemble that of the undoubted non-Aryan aborigines of the Vindhyan Kaimur plateau."

Most of the Bhurs belong to the United Provinces, and the districts in which they are most common are Azamgarh, Ballia, Benares, Fyzabad, Ghazipur, Gorakhpur, Jaunpur and Mirzapur. Some are to be found in Bihar in the districts of Champaran, Saran and Shahabad.

They migrate in large numbers to Bengal for labour in the mills and other concerns, for they are good workmen and in great demand as labourers. A few have settled permanently in Bengal with their families, but most of them visit their homes periodically and regard their stay in Bengal as only transitory.

Declaration under the Criminal Tribes Act.

Origin.

Residence.

Reputation as good workmen in the Jute mills.

They are to be found in large numbers, wherever labour is in demand, notably in Calcutta and its surrounding districts, in the coal fields and other parts of Burdwan, in the districts of Dacca, Mymensingh and Faridpur, in most of the districts of the Rajshahi range, and on all the railways.

They work as mill-hands, coolies, day labourers, cart-drivers, palanquin-bearers, and cultivators.

The Bhurs call themselves Hindus and worship the Hindu deities Kali and Siva. Brah-
Social and religious customs. mans sometimes perform their religious rites. They indulge in liquor freely, and in all sacrifices to their deities an oblation of intoxicating liquor is necessary. Widow remarriage is allowed among them.

Though the Bhur can be, and is more often than not an industrious and honest labourer,
Bhurs of criminal centres. the caste as a whole, must be regarded as having a criminal tendency, which is developed by suitable surroundings and influences. The Bhurs of the following localities may be regarded always as potential criminals :—

Police-station Mirzamurad, Boregaon, Cholaipur, Chaubepur, Sikrole (Orderly Bazar), Rohania, Bhelupur, Fulpur. Balua in the Benares district. Police-station Boodhi in Mirzapur district. Police-station Raipur and Kerakat in Jaunpur district.

Others may be taken as they are found. But even the criminal Bhur likes to hide his criminality behind a screen of honest employment, and though in the towns of Bengal many Bhurs are found with no better ostensible means of livelihood than casual labour, others may often be found working in the mills or the mines all day, while their nights are occupied in crime.

The criminal exploits of the Bhurs in Bengal have been traced back to 1874, but it was
Their criminality. not until 1897 that the police came to realize that they were dangerous and daring offenders.

In that year there was an outbreak of dacoity in the colliery districts, the most noticeable feature of which was the frequent use of dynamite to intimidate the villagers. One Kaileshwar Singh being arrested on suspicion, confessed to having taken part with other Bhurs in 31 dacoities in the districts of Birbhum, Burdwan, Hooghly and Manbhum, between the 16th September 1896 and 5th June 1897. In his confession Kaileshwar named 34 Bhurs as his accomplices. The investigation of the gang case which followed this confession led to the discovery of other gangs of Bhurs carrying on dacoity operations elsewhere, notably in the 24-Parganas. As a result of the 1897 enquiries ten Bhurs were convicted, seven of them being sentenced to transportation for life. In November 1898 there was, another serious outbreak of dacoity by Bhurs in the 24-Parganas. In the course of investigation several arrests were made in and around Calcutta and six men, including four Bhurs, namely, Sundar Bhur, Bhagoloo Bhur, Ramdeo Bhur and Indra Bhur, confessed to 48 dacoities two attempts at dacoity, one robbery, and one burglary committed in the districts of Burdwan, Dacca, Faridpur, Hooghly, Howrah, Midnapore, Mymensingh, Nadia and French Chandernagore, between November 1898 and July 1903. In these confessions, 49 Bhurs were implicated. During this period Bhurs were convicted in 47 specific cases, i.e., eight dacoities, one robbery, 11 burglaries, 21 thefts and 6 other non-bailable cases against property, and 17 Bhurs were bound down in eight cases, under sections 109 and 110, Criminal Procedure Code. In 1904 a gang case was started on the basis of the above confessions, in which 21 Bhurs were convicted, three being transported for life and the rest transported for ten years. After this there was a temporary cessation of dacoity by Bhurs, but 12 Bhurs were convicted in specific cases of burglary and theft, and nine were bound down under section 110, Criminal

Procedure Code, in 1905-06. In the beginning of 1907 there was again a serious outbreak of crime against property by the Bhurs in Hooghly and the 24-Parganas, and gang cases were instituted against three gangs of Bhurs in the 24-Parganas. In the case known as Chhatter Bhur's gang case (1907) three Bhurs, named Chhatter Bhur, Roghubir Bhur and Harnandan, confessed to three dacoities, four robberies, seven burglaries and one theft, implicating themselves and 14 other Bhurs. In this case six Bhurs were convicted, five to seven years' rigorous imprisonment and one to five years' on 1st February 1908. In the second gang case approver Sahadeo Bhur confessed to one dacoity, eight burglaries and five thefts, implicating himself and 26 other Bhurs. In this case seven Bhurs were convicted and sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment on 19th March 1908. In the third gang case approver Bulaki Kurmi confessed to 20 burglaries, and implicated seven Bhurs as his accomplices. In this case five Bhurs were convicted and sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment on the 4th November 1908. The convictions obtained in the above cases did not, however, deter the Bhurs from committing crime in Bengal, as is evident from the fact that within a period of 7 months after the gang cases were disposed of, eight Bhurs were convicted of non-bailable offences and four under the preventive sections of the Criminal Procedure Code. In the middle of 1909, there was again a serious outbreak of dacoity in the districts of Hooghly, Howrah and 24-Parganas. Some Bhurs were arrested, of whom four confessed to ten dacoities and six burglaries committed between 12th July 1909 and 5th February 1910 in the districts of Hooghly, Howrah, 24-Parganas, Jessore and Midnapore. In these confessions, 32 Bhurs were implicated. Another gang case followed, resulting in the conviction in December 1910 of six Bhurs, three of them being transported for life.

From December 1910 up to June 1914 thirty-two Bhurs have been convicted in 30 cases, and in 12 more cases Bhurs have been suspected.

The *modus operandi* of the Bhurs is variable and depends on circumstances. They will commit theft in any form, from dacoity to shop-pilfering and pocket-picking. In burglary they sometimes effect an entrance by means of the *sindh*; in dacoities, where there is a courtyard, one man scales the wall and admits his companions by the main door. In burglaries and thefts they may operate singly or in gangs.

When on a criminal expedition, they sometimes carry measuring rods and baskets in order to pass off as contractors and labourers. In dacoities they often use axes to break open doors and chests.

As already mentioned, in their dacoities in the colliery districts in 1896-97 they used dynamite to frighten the villagers.

Declaration under the
Criminal Tribes Act.

The United Provinces have proclaimed the following Bhurs under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1911 :—

Bhurs of Aligarh, Benares, Jaunpur and Azamgarh (*vide* Notification No. 390—VIII, 327, 329, 333—VIII, dated the 20th February 1914).

The Bengal Government has proclaimed (*vide* Government Notification No. 8 P., dated 4th January 1915) under the Criminal Tribes Act all Bhurs residing in the Presidency of Bengal convicted in specific non-bailable cases or ordered under section 118, Criminal Procedure Code, to furnish security for good behaviour. These numbered in 1914 271 persons (out of a total of 2,064 Bhurs in Bengal) all males. The females are not known to take part in crime.

The recorded convictions of these Bhurs spread over the following districts—24-Parganas, Calcutta, Howrah, Hooghly Midnapore, Dacca, Burdwan, Dinajpur, Malda, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Nadia, Bogra and Mymensingh.

Field of operation in
Bengal.

CHHATTISGARH CHAMARS.

During the investigation of a dacoity near Naihati in 1913, attention was drawn to the presence in Bengal of a large number of Chamars from Bilaspur and other places of the Chhattisgarh Division of the Central Provinces. Enquiries made in the Central Provinces showed that these Chamars, who have a very bad criminal reputation in their own country, have for some time been coming to Bengal in large numbers in search of employment as labourers on Public Works Department buildings, railway construction, in brick fields, mills and the docks. They have been found working in Kalimati, Midnapore, Kharagpur, Howrah, Nadia, Jessore and Khulna. According to the notes published in a supplement to the *Criminal Intelligence Gazette* of the Central Provinces on the 10th June 1914, house-breaking is the chief crime of the Chhattisgarh Chamars, but they also at times commit thefts, robberies and dacoities, and are experts at cattle-lifting. They are said to have no special *modus operandi* of their own, though they generally use a round instrument with a sharp flat end for breaking into houses.

"As a rule," says the writer of the Notes in the *Central Provinces Gazette*, "bazaar days are selected and arrangements are made beforehand for disposal of the stolen property."

They dispose of their property generally to the local Sonars and sometimes to Bantias and Kâsârs. The duties of a party committing burglary are pre-arranged: one breaks open a house, another enters, whilst the rest usually keep watch outside. They are said to have a skilful way of hiding themselves with the help of cloaks of threaded straw which they carry with them. In the event of an alarm, they run to the nearest straw stack and cover themselves with this wrap until the alarm is over. The same wrap is often

Forms of crime to which addicted.

Disposal of property.

used to assist them in cattle stealing. Covered with it they will lie down in a field close to a herd of cattle, and by gradual movements urge the animals slowly to a safe distance, whence they can be driven off.

The Chamars have a great reputation in their homes for cattle poisoning, in which they often employ the *sui*, known in Bihar as the *sutâri*, a poisonous spike prepared principally from *ghungchi* seeds, called in Bihar *karjani*. These spikes, when dried in the sun, become extremely hard and are fixed into a bamboo handle, by the aid of which they can be driven into the skin of cattle causing death in a few hours.*

A cruder method of cattle poisoning.

The Chamars also resort to the cruder method of inserting poison into the *anus* of the animal they wish to destroy. They are, however, less likely to resort to cattle poisoning in Bengal than in their own country, where they have a claim to the skins of all cattle dying in the village.

The Central Provinces note states that the percentage of convictions in the community is very high, and that during recent years the criminality has shown a tendency to increase. "They seem," writes the author, "to be subject to no moral scruples or restraint. Very few of them have any real respect for their *gurus*. To lie, steal, destroy cattle and commit arson are their every-day, affairs, whilst the bolder spirits indulge in burglaries, dacoities and violent assaults."

The Chamars are known for their pluck. They are fair, tall, strong men, and are ever ready to come to blows, should occasion arise.

They are said to be improving their circumstances and to be able now to fraternise with members of other castes better than their own, and the Central Provinces authorities consider it likely that they will

* This method of poisoning has been sometimes used on human beings.

combine with other castes in Bengal in the commission of crime, as they are quite ready to accept the leadership of an expert of another caste.

They are said to favour the commission of crime in the jurisdiction of a police-station other than that in which they reside, believing that the average Sub-Inspector takes little interest in the detection of crime that occurs outside his own jurisdiction. A large number of these Chamars have been found to be employed on ballast and earth-work on the Eastern Bengal State Railway, and they are believed to have been responsible for many burglaries and, at least one dacoity, in the neighbourhood of the railway lines.

CHHAPPARBANDS.

Chhapparbands are makers and utterers of counterfeit coins, most of them residing in the Bijapur district of the Bombay Presidency, where they were proclaimed under the Criminal Tribes Act on the 6th September 1912.

The Chhapparbands travel to all parts of India, absenting themselves from their homes for long periods. They are Muhammadans, and their names almost invariably terminate with "Shah." They generally travel in the guise of Muhammadan mendicants, but can and do on rare occasions pass themselves off as Hindus. Their native language is Mahratti, with a slang of their own, and they are quick at picking up local languages on their travels. In their homes they cultivate land and the women make mats and quilts, but in their wanderings, in which the women do not accompany the men, their ostensible means of livelihood is always mendicancy.

But the Chhapparbands' main source of income is the manufacture and uttering of Counterfeiting and moulded counterfeit coins, both uttering coins. rupees and small silver. Mr. Michael Kennedy, in his notes on Criminal Classes of the Bombay Presidency, tells us that on their expeditions they usually proceed in groups of from three to ten, though as many as 30 have been found in one gang. The party is generally under the leadership of an old and experienced hand called "Khagda," whose orders are implicitly obeyed, and who receives a larger share of the earnings than any of the others.

The Chhapparband manufactures his coins in the course of his travel, and has no Process of counterfeiting. elaborate machinery or materials, his moulds being prepared from a fine sticky clay with which he provides himself before leaving his own country, if he intends to travel in parts where it is not obtainable. A lump of this clay is divided into two discs, a genuine rupee slightly oiled, is placed between them, and the clay is pressed round the coin. The discs are then again separated round the margin of the coin, and a small channel having been cut for the molten metal to be poured through, the rupee is removed, the discs are hardened by baking, and the mould is ready for use. Several moulds are prepared and set up on end and the metal, which Mr. Kennedy says is a mixture of copper or *kansa* and tin, is poured into the mould. The coin is afterwards trimmed, milled and polished by hand.

The Chhapparband coins are very poor imitations of the genuine article, which perhaps Their coins. accounts for the fact that, when possible, they select old women with defective eyesight as their victims. A favourite method of uttering is to get into their hands on some pretext Method of uttering. a genuine rupee belonging to some



CHHAPPARBAND.

other man, and by sleight-of-hand substitute for it one of their own counterfeits. This they often do by offering seventeen annas worth of pice for a rupee, on the pretence that they have too many pice and find them inconvenient to carry. On receiving the rupee the Chhapparband examines it and declares that it is not the kind of rupee current in his country, and demanding back his pice, returns, not the genuine rupee, but the substituted counterfeit.

Chhapparbands have been found in Bengal carrying supplies of counterfeit coins concealed beneath their private parts.

Concealment of coins in their persons.

Mr. Kennedy states that they wear *langotis*, the front flap of which is cunningly provided with a pocket. When a man is searched, he releases his *langoti* from the back and allows it to hang down in front, and thus the pocket often escapes notice. For this reason Mr. Kennedy advises that in searching a Chhapparband, his *langoti* should be taken off altogether and submitted to a careful and thorough examination. Mr. Kennedy quotes one instance in which no less than seven rupees were found concealed in a cavity in the rectum of a Chhapparband. He therefore counsels medical examination before the police search is concluded. Chhapparbands also conceal counterfeits in the mouth, and some times swallow them when arrested.

Chhapparbands make free use of the post office to send the proceeds of their business to their homes.

Mr. Kennedy gives the following account of their methods of indicating the road they have taken to companions who are following them :—

“Chhapparbands leave information to their caste fellows behind of the road they have taken, by making at crossings a heap of mud or earth measuring about a foot long, 6 inches broad, and 6 inches high, and drawing an arrow in front of it showing the direction

Indication of their route to their fellow members.

taken. Three such heaps are made at intervals of a hundred yards or so to provide against accident to anyone of them. Or, heaps of earth are made on the edge of the road by dragging the foot sideways along the ground. The broad mark, culminating in a heap, thus made, points to the road along which the Chhapparbands may be looked for. Sometimes in lieu of these signs a line with a curl at one end is drawn in the dust on the side of the road followed, alternative routes being closed by a cross. The straight end of the line indicates the route taken. Or again, a few twigs may be placed under stones on the side of a road, the broken stalks pointing the direction followed. Two lines, each curled at one end, drawn in the dust on a road, indicate to members detached from a gang the neighbourhood in which they should cast about to find their comrades."

CHAIN CHAMARS.

The Chain Chamars resemble in most respects, and have much in common with the Chain Mallahs (*see* p. 91).

The term Chain is applied to any class addicted to petty pilfering, and we hear also of Chain Pâsis, Chain Dusâdhs and Chain Mallahs.

The Chain Chamars of the United Provinces, chiefly those of Ghazipur and Jaunpur, have acquired a criminal reputation as a distinct class.

Between the years 1904 and 1907 Chain Chamars of Ghazipur and Ballia were found to be committing crime with Chain Mallahs and Palwar Dusâdhs in Patna, all three castes confining themselves to petty thieving. In 1909 the United Provinces police instituted a gang case against the Chain Chamars of the Ghazipur district, in which 30 persons were convicted.

Chain Chamars have been convicted in Howrah, 24-Parganas and Murshidabad, generally under sections 379 and 411, Indian Penal Code, or the bad-livelihood sections. The Chain Chamars make use of boys to assist in carrying out their thefts more frequently than do the Chain Mallahs. They are not so numerous or so criminal as the Chain Mallahs, nor do they work over such a wide area.

One of their tricks is to obtain a lodging as a wayfarer or mendicant in a house in which they intend to commit theft.

Their methods. Their women are expert swindlers and pick-pockets. Gangs of Chain Chamars, consisting of men, women and children, have been arrested in recent years.

In 1913 in the United Provinces all the Chain Chamars of villages in the Ghazipur district, and such Chain Chamars in certain villages of Jaunpur district as had been convicted of non-bailable offences or ordered to furnish security under section 118, Criminal Procedure Code, were declared a criminal tribe under the Criminal Tribes Act by United Provinces Government Notification No. 1274—VIII-158-4 and No. 6—VIII-158, dated the 3rd January 1914.

DHARHIS.

The Dharhis are a low caste of Hindu found in certain districts of Bihar, mostly in the districts of Patna and Monghyr. Crooke and Risley both assert that they are a branch of the Dusadh caste, but the Dharhis themselves deny the connection, declaring that they are descended from a Goala, who accidentally killed a cow.

The Dharhis worship the Hindu deities, and phenomena of nature, such as the sun, the moon and the earth, also deified heroes and animal gods, including the snake.

They also pay particular reverence to the *sindh-kathi*, or as it is called more commonly in Bihar *sindh-mâri*, the instrument with which they dig holes in walls when committing burglaries. This instrument is prepared by them only on auspicious days, and they believe it has been given them by the God Biskarma to earn their livelihood. During the Durga Puja and Dasahara they burn incense to this instrument, and they have a belief that a Dharhi who desecrates his *sindh-kathi* is doomed to become a leper. The touch of a female defiles the instrument.

The Dharhis eat pigs, sheep and goats, but, unlike the Dusadhs, will not touch fowls.

Social status.

They will take food touched by any caste except Dusadhs, Chamars, Musahars, Dhobis and Doms. The Dhobis wash for them, and they are allowed by better castes to draw water from the village wells.

The Dharhis are fine men physically, and can travel enormous distances without fatigue.

Physique and costume.

Their ordinary costume is a *dhoti* and *gamcha*. When travelling on a thieving expedition, they will sometimes wear a *kurta* and a *pugree* in order to pass, if possible, for men of higher caste.

Colonel Ramsay, who was District Superintendent of Police of Monghyr in 1888, had 200 prisoners in the Monghyr Jail medically examined, when it was found that the Dharhis among them were the best nourished and generally the most powerful among the prisoners in the jail.

During this year (1888) Colonel Ramsay introduced a form of special surveillance over

Surveillance and criminality.

the Dharhis, by which their absences from home were constantly recorded. They were found to be inveterate wanderers, constantly absenting themselves during the dark

half of the month on the excuse of pilgrimages, and there was every reason to believe that these pilgrimages were invariably in the nature of burgling expeditions.

Colonel Ramsay records that at that time they invariably worked in gangs of seven men, but he states only three definite instances of the arrest of gangs of seven. Some convicted Dharhis informed him that it was their custom that during the expedition each member of the party should take the name of a day of the week, and if any act of extreme violence had to be committed in the course of their enterprise, the man who bore the name of the day of the week on which it fell, had to commit it.

The Dharhis are or were extensively employed as village chankidars, night watchmen over standing crops or *khalians*, and *zemindari* letter carriers. They are also formidable *lathials* in agrarian riots. More recently they have developed to some extent as cultivators.

The form of crime to which they are most addicted is burglary, and their entrances are almost invariably effected by means of the *sindh* or hole in the wall.

Out of 1,003 Dharhis in the Monghyr district in 1888, 209 had 431 convictions between them, whilst some 60 names of Dharhis appearing in the Jail Admission Register could not be connected with any men known then outside the jail.

They travel great distances on their burgling expeditions, the eastern districts of Bengal not being too remote for them, though they prefer to operate in districts nearer their homes. They commit burglaries only on dark nights, and frequently commit several in one village in one night.

Their weapon of defence is the *lathi*, which they use readily, if opposed. Their receivers are believed to be zemindars and petty landholders around their own villages. It is said, too, that chaukidars and daffadars frequently get a portion of their gains as a reward for not reporting their absence from their homes. They are said to consult Brahmans to fix auspicious dates for their expeditions. They sacrifice pigs and pour out liquor at the altar of their hero god after a successful tour.

The following is the distribution of Dharhis in the province of Bihar and Orissa according to the census of 1911—

Distribution.

TRIBE.	British district.	Native State.	Total No.	No. of males.
Dharhis ...	Patna ...	...	1,876	920
	Gaya ...	...	6	6
	Shahabad	...	12	12
	Darbhanga	...	514	252
	Monghyr	...	2,355	1,506
	Bhagalpur	...	397	232
	Purnea ...	...	12	2

The Dharhis of Patna, Monghyr and Bhagalpur have been declared a criminal tribe under Act III of 1911 (*vide* Bihar and Orissa Government Notifications Nos. 645-647 P., dated the 27th February 1915).

MAGAHIYA DOMS.

In their present state of degradation the Doms generally are regarded everywhere as potential criminals, but it is only among the Magahiya Doms that the commission of crime is regarded as an obligation of manhood almost amounting to a religious duty. A Magahiya, Dom reaching manhood without having taken part

Criminal tendencies of the Magahiya Doms.

in a successful theft or burglary, would be regarded with disfavour by the females of the caste and with contempt by the males. At least, this was the admitted rule among them, when as Superintendent of Police of Champaran in 1901 I was acquainted with the Magahiya Dom settlements in that district, and there is no reason to believe any change has taken place yet in the ethics of the tribe.

The Magahiya Doms belong chiefly to the districts of Gorakhpur and Azamgarh in the United Provinces, and Saran and Champaran in Bihar.

Residence.

Attempts made from time to time to settle them by providing them with land and cattle have met with little success. The

Nomadic life.

gipsy blood in the Magahiya Dom is too strong for such an experiment to succeed without compulsion, and they soon tire of efforts at agriculture, in which they have little skill, and break away to their natural nomadic life. They are now found in large numbers in Bengal, and in some places are employed as municipal sweepers.

Scavenging and the disposal of dead bodies are, as a rule, the ostensible means of livelihood of the Doms in Bengal, and however troublesome they may be as criminals, their usefulness in these lines is beyond question.

Their usefulness to municipalities.

But even when in regular pay in the employment of municipalities, the Magahiya Doms require careful police supervision, and many of those so employed are hardened criminals with previous convictions in Bihar and the United Provinces.

The Magahiya Doms commit every kind of offence against property, though so far only one gang (the Calcutta Gang of 1904)

Forms of crime.

has been brought to conviction for dacoity committed on a large scale. Their favourite forms of crime are burglary and highway robbery, and they are fond of

sneaking in at open doors and carrying off anything in the way of clothing, towels, etc., they can lay their hands on.

The Magahiya Dom is a daring and almost fool-hardy

Bagli Sindh.

burglar. His favourite method of effecting an entrance is by the *bagli*

sindh, a small hole cut in the wall close to the door-post, through which the arm can pass to open the bolt or latch of the door. He is generally provided with a box of matches and strikes a light as soon as he gets inside. He walks about a house in a reckless manner, looking for things worth stealing, and is rough

Methods of crime.

in his methods of removing ornaments from sleeping women and children. Should he finish burgling one house without rousing the inmates, he generally goes on to the house next-door, and with luck will sometimes ransack five or six houses in one village in one night. He is remarkably clever at escaping his pursuers, a favourite method being to scamper off on all fours howling in imitation of a jackal.

The Magahiya Doms also practice the form of swindling known as bead swindling, which

Bead swindling.

consists of offering for sale brass beads representing them to be of gold. The women are generally the workers in this form of crime.

Many stories are told about the origin of the Doms, but

Origin.

according to Sir H. Risley, beyond mere speculation, the only fact that can be asserted is that they are a remnant of the aborigines of this country. In favour of this theory he puts forward his description of the pure Magahiya in the following words:—"They are small and dark-skinned, with flat features and exceedingly bright glassy eyes, in fact the first thing noticeable about a Dom is the peculiar glitter of his eyes."

This description can scarcely be applied to all the

Physique.

Magahiya Doms known to the police, many of whom are of good medium

stature with moderately good features. All of the pure breed, however, are dark-skinned with long unkempt hair and are frequently indescribably filthy and ragged.

The Magahiya will assimilate all castes except Dhobis, which may account for the frequent

Habits and religion.

exceptions to the description given by Sir H. Risley. They are inveterate drunkards and their chief deities, Gandak, and a female deity called Samai or Samaya, are worshipped with oblations of liquor and the sacrifice of pigs. A successful theft or burglary is generally followed by a prolonged drinking bout.

The Bansphor Doms, who are basket-workers by profession, are probably descended from

Bansphor Doms.

the same stock as the Magahiyas.

The story told by the Magahiya is that Sripach, the founder of the race, had two wives. His son by the first became a basket-maker and was the ancestor of the Bansphors, while the son of the other wife went with his mother to Magadha, where he founded the Magahiyas. There is a third subdivision of Doms called Darkars, who appear to be an offshoot of the Bansphors. Bansphors and Darkars have abandoned the nomadic habits still clung to by the Magahiya, and generally have fixed abodes on the outskirts of villages in Bihar and the United Provinces, where they profess to live by basket-making and scavenging. Some have even advanced to cultivation.

The Magahiya, however, has made no advance, and looks on work in any form as a punishment. He considers that honest labour is more irksome and has poorer results than burglary; still with all his detestation of work he prefers any term of imprisonment to whipping, a punishment which causes him real terror. Regarding it as inevitable that a considerable part of every Magahiya's life should be spent in jail, the caste has a recognized custom that during the absence of a husband in jail his wife shall attach herself temporarily for the maintenance

of herself and children to any other member of the caste, returning to her former husband on his release.

The women are well made and often good-looking,

generally well dressed and decked
 Their women. with ornaments. They are loose in

their sexual habits and have no scruples against prostituting themselves outside their own caste.

In 1914 an officer of the Criminal Investigation Department, deputed to report on the Magahiya Doms in Bengal, found 174

settlements of them. They were found in all districts, with the exception of Bakarganj, Chittagong, Tippera and Khulna, the total number amounting to 1,727 men, women and children. Of these 301 have been convicted in non-bailable cases, and in addition to these 465, who had been convicted in non-bailable cases in Bengal, could not be traced by the enquiring officer. These convictions include 31 females. The number of those traced, convicted in bad-livelihood cases arising out of non-bailable offences was 80, while 72 so convicted in Bengal could not be traced.

In the United Provinces all Doms, excluding the Kumaon Domras, have been proclaimed under

Declaration under the
Criminal Tribes Act.

the Criminal Tribes Act (*vide* Notification No. 1092—VIII-308) and

in Bihar and Orissa all Magahiya Doms of the Tirhut Division have been so proclaimed (*vide* Notification No. 3257 P, dated the 9th August 1913).

PALWAR DUSADHS.

For purposes of criminal classification, a very definite line may be drawn between the

Origin.

Palwar Dusadhs of the United Provinces and the Dusadh caste generally. Though the Dusadhs of the Bihar districts have among them a considerable number of criminals, expert burglars and

thieves, nowhere in Bihar except perhaps in the south of the Monghyr district, where the so-called Chakai Dusadhs are found, can the caste be described as a really criminal one. In fact about the year 1904, there was a strong movement among the Dusadhs of the Patna district for social reform. One Tulsi Dusadh, the leader of the movement, urged that all Dusadhs found guilty of theft should be out-casted. For a time at least the movement had considerable influence. As labourers and domestic servants the ordinary Dusadhs are capable and as honest as any other castes employed in similar duties. Not so the Palwar Dusadhs of Ballia, whose criminality is established, and who were proclaimed under the Criminal Tribes Act in October 1913 (*vide United Provinces Gazette Notification No. 1270—VIII-158-8*, dated the 1st October 1913).

Sub-castes.

According to Crooke the Dusadhs are divided into eight sub-castes which do not intermarry, though nearly all of them will eat cooked food together. He includes in these sub-castes the Dharhis, a caste of strong criminal tendencies found in the districts of Patna, Monghyr and Bhagalpur, who, however, regard themselves and are regarded by police officers with considerable knowledge of them, as a caste quite distinct from the Dusadhs, though very similar in habits. The Dharhis have been dealt with in Chapter 10, Part II of this book.

In religion, the Palwars do not differ from the other sub-castes of

Religion and social status.

Dusadh. They claim to be orthodox Hindus and worship Hindu deities, their chief deity being Rahu, one of whose distinctions is to cause eclipses by swallowing the sun and moon. They employ as priests any Brahmans willing to serve them, but, failing a Brahman, one of their own caste acts as a priest. They keep and tend pigs for their own food as well as for sale. They eat fowls and field rats, and

indulge freely in intoxicating liquors. They will take food from any caste of Hindu except Dhobis, and such very unclean castes as Doms and Chamars. They permit polygamy and widow remarriage.

The following is an extract from the notes on Dusadhs appearing in the Report on Inter-Provincial Crime written by Mr. Bramley, of the United Provinces Police in 1904.

Mr. Bramley's report.

In respect to inter-provincial crime therefore the only section of the tribe we have need to deal with is the Palwar Dusadhs of Ballia.

Occupation.

"That the Palwar Dusadhs of Ballia have well-organized gangs who work in pursuance of systematically laid plans will be evident from the exhaustive judgment delivered by the Sessions Judge in a Dusadh gang case decided there on 9th May 1899, as also from the confession of Mutter Dusadh, who was then made an approver. And further corroborative evidence in this respect will be obtainable from the records in the more recent cases in Malda and Mymensingh, in which the same Mutter Dusadh and 16 or 20 others were concerned."

"The Palwar Dusadhs, like other kindred and quasi-criminal tribes, have established colonies and criminal connections in Bengal, one of the most remarkable being in the Malda district, where it seems that a hundred or more of these people are employed as village chaukidars, and the last census (1901) revealed the curious fact that there were only 147 men to 212 women, from which we may infer that a considerable number of adult males then residing in Malda were never registered at all. And Malda, it may be noted, appears to have been the base of operation in both Dinajpur and Mymensingh raids. Murshidabad is another place where the Palwar (163) have formed a small permanent colony."

Colonies in Bengal.

Mr. Bramley goes on to say that the Palwars in Bengal make free use of assumed names to conceal their identity, and quotes instances of despatch of money-orders from Bengal to the Ballia district, a common feature of which was a remitter unknown and untraceable either in Bengal or Ballia, while the names of the payees were never incorrect and were at once found in the local Dusadh registers.

The distribution of the Palwars in the Ballia district in 1904 was stated by Mr. Bramley to be 39 villages in police-station Pallia, 66 villages in police-station Berriah, 27 villages in police-station Haldi, 26 villages in police-station Bansdih, 49 villages in police-station Reoti.

The field of operations extends to almost every district in Bengal, as well as to Assam and the State of Cooch Behar.

Though the Palwar Dusadhs are not found in large numbers working in the mills in Bengal, many are employed in the coalfields and still more on the railways and wherever ordinary cooly labour is in demand. As many as 65 of them were employed as railway coolies at Katihar alone in May 1914. Here the local district police had no complaint to make against them, nor did it appear burglary and theft were very prevalent in the Katihar town, but the great facilities afforded at Katihar for pilfering from railway consignments with, practically no fear of punishment, doubtless kept them from going further afield to commit crime involving a risk of falling into the hands of the police. It is, however, probable that Palwar Dusadhs employed on the railways with other criminal castes similarly employed, are often responsible for burglaries and even dacoities committed near the line of rail.

The case histories in the Criminal Intelligence Bureau show that the Palwar Dusadhs work both singly and in gangs. They will commit dacoity, burglary, pocket-picking, ornament snatching, bundle lifting, in fact theft in every form.

In some cases a gang has taken a temporary lodging in a crowded locality and after a short stay to acquire the necessary local knowledge, started a series of burglaries, disappearing directly they commenced to fall under suspicion.

Mr. Bramley believes they are to a great extent under the protection of the zemindars in their own district, and gives instances in which this has been shown to be the case.

CHAKAI DUSADHS.

The Chakai Dusadhs referred to in the Chapter on Palwar Dusadhs are a division of the caste found in the hilly tracts of Monghyr, Hazaribagh, Santal Parganas, Bhagalpur and Birbhum. They take their name from Chakai in the Jamui subdivision of the Monghyr district. Mr. C. W. C. Plowden, C.I.E., for many years in charge of the Bengal Criminal Investigation Department, when Bengal included the Bihar district, regards the Chakai Dusadhs as entirely different from the other Dusadhs of Bihar, and believes they are Bauriyas, who have settled in the locality and called themselves Dusadhs. Unlike the Palwar Dusadhs the Chakai Dusadhs do not, as a rule, invade the whole of Bengal, but they come in large numbers to the colliery districts, where they work as miners and indulge in crime freely, forming sometimes large and formidable organizations. In the year 1903, a large gang of Chaka Dusadhs was prosecuted and convicted under section 400 Indian Penal Code, in their home district of Monghyr

According to the statement of the approver, this gang had been in existence for 18 or 20 years. They used to meet once or twice a month, and, after consultation, break up into several parties and go on thieving expeditions in all directions. It appears to be the custom of the Chakai Dusadhs, when committing crime in gangs, to assemble after dark either in the house of one of the members or in the jungles. They do not, as a rule, resort to serious violence in the commission of crime, and commit burglary and theft in preference to dacoity.

JADUA BRAHMINS.

The term Jadua, meaning 'magician,' is applied to a sect of Brahmans found principally in Patna and in the thanas of Mahua and Hajipur in the district of Muzaffarpur. Those residing in the jurisdiction of police-station Alamganj, in Patna city, are all nominally under police surveillance. They are a degenerate class of Brahmans practising none of the religious observances of the true Brahmans, and indulging in fish, meat and intoxicating liquor.

Their notoriety in police records is gained from the particular forms of swindling, which, once almost a monopoly of theirs, are now practised by many other criminal castes and classes. The doubling of wealth by magic or transformation of silver into gold are their favourite pretensions, and they resort to a variety of methods in the working of their swindles. They start out on their expeditions in parties of three or four, and, having ascertained by preliminary enquiry the whereabouts of a likely dupe, send on one of the party to the village in the guise of a religious wanderer, one of the younger members of the party sometimes accompanying him as a *chela* (disciple). The religious

wanderer establishes himself in a village, taking up an attitude of pious meditation. After a few hours or days, others of the party, representing themselves to be *zemindars* or *bantias* from distant places, enter the village enquiring if a very holy Brahman has been seen there, saying that they have come to do homage to him as he has turned their silver ornaments into gold. They make diligent enquiries at the house of the intended dupe, who, his cupidity being roused, entreats the holy man to come to his house and to transform his silver into gold. The Brahman takes his time about yielding to the dupe's entreaties, but eventually asks to be accommodated with his *chela* in an inner room, generally dark, and with a mud floor.

Cases on record in the Criminal Investigation Department show a variety of tricks resorted to, to impress the selected dupes with the idea of the mystic power of the Brahman. In one case the dupe was directed to place a rupee on his forehead and to go to the door and look at the sun for five minutes, being assured that, when he returned, the Brahman would have disappeared by magic. Naturally, having looked at the sun for five minutes, the dupe saw nothing at first on returning to the dark room. As his eyes got used to the darkness, the Brahman reappeared and he was simple enough to believe the disappearance and reappearance were accomplished by magic power. Sometimes the dupe is taken outside the village at night, the Brahman promising to show him the goddess Lachmi, who is duly represented by one of the confederates in costume, and promises good fortune to her selected *protégé*. When the selected dupe has a quantity of gold at his disposal, the reputation of the Brahman is for doubling articles placed in his charge. If he is rich in silver, he is led to believe it can be turned into gold.

Pretended power of becoming invisible.

Confederate representing goddess Lachmi.

When the Brahman is once established in the dupe's house, the procedure is in the ordinary form* of the Doubling Trick, with the recitation of *mantras* and *slokas*. The dupe produces all his possessions, which are tied by the Brahman in a bundle or sometimes concealed in balls of clay prepared for the occasion. By various tricks and sleight-of-hand, valuable articles are extracted from the bundles or balls of clay before these are buried in a hole dug in the mud floor of the house. Sometimes, however, they are actually buried in the presence of the victim, being dug up again and extracted during the night when the victim is asleep. When the valuables have been duly conveyed to the confederates outside and they have been able to get a fair start, the Brahman completes the ceremonies by burning ghee and incense over the spot where the victim believes his wealth is buried, and after uttering many *mantras* he bids the victim watch the place carefully for some hours or days, assuring him that when he digs it up at the right time he will find the magic accomplished. Generally, the dupe scrupulously follows the advice of the Brahmin and consequently does not find out his loss until the swindlers are far away.

As a preliminary to the swindle, the Jadua Brahman sometimes represents to the selected victim that he is specially favoured by Lachmi and pretends to discover hidden treasure in his house. They frequently introduce themselves to the victims as *pandas* of Jagannath and Baidyanath.

KARWAL NUTS.

It is very difficult to trace the origin of these people, or clearly define what the term
 Ethnology. Karwal Nut includes. In the old

* Several varieties of the Doubling Trick are described "in my Note on Common Swindles and Thieves' Tricks" published in the *Bengal Criminal Intelligence Gazette*, dated the 20th November 1914, as a special supplement.

Bengal Police Code the Karwals were described as follows :—

“A hunting and criminal tribe. A number of them were imported many years back by Raja Mitrajit Singh, and some of their descendants, settled at Tikari, committed dacoities in league with the police, down to a recent date.”

Neither Risley nor Crooke makes any mention of the Karwals, and in the last census no caste or tribe appears to have been entered under the heading “Karwal Nuts,” though 10,000 people were enumerated in Bengal under the comprehensive heading of “Nuts,” of whom nearly 2,600, about 1,300 males and as many females, were in the Rajshahi Division.

When a preliminary registration of the Karwal Nuts was made by Deputy Superintendent Rai Sahib Ananga Mohan Mukharjee in 1913, with a view to preparing a case against them under the Criminal Tribes Act, he was informed generally by those he questioned that their ancestors came from Bhojpur (in the district of Arrah), and that they are divided into the following sub-castes :—(1) Haburah, (2) Sansia, (3) Sanchiria, (4) Brojobasis and (5) Gulgulias, and that each of these sub-castes is endogamous.

It is impossible to lay down emphatically that every person calling himself by any of these names is necessarily of the same race as the Karwals who have for years infested Northern Bengal, and were proclaimed under the Criminal Tribes Act in Government Notification No. 3029 P.—D., dated the 11th September 1913. For instance, people calling themselves Gulgulias were found in the districts of Midnapore and Bankura in June 1914, who appeared to originate from the Orissa Tributary States or the Central Provinces, and to be a very different race from the Karwals found in North Bengal.

The Government of the United Provinces overcame the difficulty of distinguishing between the various wandering tribes, by making their proclamation under the Criminal Tribes Act apply to "all gypsies." The Bengal Government Notification No. 3029 P.—D. applies to the tribe known generally as Karwals "by whatever name it, or any member thereof, may for the time being call itself or themselves, or be called, in any locality in the said Presidency, whether by the name of Karwal Nuts or Karwals or Kanjars or Kajarhatyas or Haburahs, or Sansias or Sanichirias, or Brojabasis or Gulgulias, or Bhatas or by any other tribal name, appellation or *alias* to be a criminal tribe for the purposes of the said Act."

Wherever the Nuts had their origin, they are certainly foreigners in Bengal. They generally follow the customs of very low class up-country Hindus. They eat meat, including pork, and declare they cannot live without intoxicating drink, but they do not eat fish. They worship the Hindu goddess Kali, and two lesser deities of their own, whom they call Deo and Kushmina. They have no priests. A small section of the tribe is said to follow an irregular form of Muhammadanism and to take Muhammadan names, but none of them were encountered by Rai Sahib A. M. Mukerjee during his enquiries in the Rajshahi Division. They speak a *patois* of Hindustani, and have slang words of their own. They are of dark complexion and good stature, and dress like low class Hindus of Bihar and the United Provinces. The women wear long skirts (*ghaghra*), in which they conceal stolen articles when they commit crime.

They wander about in gangs living in tents of coarse cloth or bamboo mat, accompanied by a number of buffaloes, ponies,

Declaration under the Criminal Tribes Act.

Social and religious customs.

Composition of Karwal gangs.

donkeys and dogs. The strength of these gangs ranges from three or four to 25 in number, the women usually outnumbering the men. When a gang is on the move the men often absent themselves from it, following at a distance. A Karwal gang on the march is almost always headed by women, and the women take a prominent part in the command of the gang even when in camp. Members of one gang frequently change to another, and the strength of the gangs varies considerably from time to time.

The Karwals have no ostensible means of subsistence other than begging, though
 Occupation. they sometimes profess to trade in buffaloes, goats and donkeys. The men hunt wild cats and mongooses for food. The women sometimes earn money by music and dancing, and occasionally by prostitution. They are all, however, thieves by profession and heredity.

In 1907 there was a serious outbreak of crime in Bihar and Chota Nagpur, which included dacoity, burglary and theft, and was traced to an invasion of Karwals. No less than five cases under section 401, Indian Penal Code, were instituted. The judgments in these cases leave no doubt that the main source of livelihood of the Karwals is crime. They commit every kind of offence against property along their line of march, as has been proved in certain cases by investigating officers working back on their tracks. Their most common offence, however, is the theft of utensils and goats.

The Karwals are a nuisance to the villagers wherever they go. They cause great damage by allowing their cattle to feed on standing crops. They also thief from the standing crops to feed themselves and their cattle. The women are as active in crime as the men.

It is gathered from the case records that one of their
 Criminality. favourite methods of pilfering is
 for a party of ten or twelve to go

round begging. When they find a house from which the men are all absent, some of the women distract the attention of the inmates and their neighbours by begging, dancing or singing, while others enter the house and pilfer any ornaments and cash they can lay hands on, concealing what they steal under the long skirt about their persons.

Though burglary is a common form of crime with them, there is no case on record of their effecting their entrance by means of *sindh*s.

The Karwal Nuts frequently adopt an offensive and truculent manner towards the police or villagers, and their behaviour on such occasions is indecent and violent, the women being even more ready than the men to shout filthy abuse and resort to violent opposition. When in their most savage moods both women and men will strip themselves stark naked and indulge in disgustingly indecent gestures and actions, even to throwing their own excretions at those they are opposing. They resort also to the practice of dashing their children about, and on one occasion a woman went so far as to use her child as a weapon of assault. Nut women, when enraged, have been known to attack a man from behind, throwing him to the ground and gripping his testicles with intent to inflict serious injury.

The Nuts frequently change their names, and those best known to the police have several *aliases*. In recent years Karwals have been convicted in the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Purneah, Pabna, Mymensingh, Nadia, Rangpur, Malda, Jalpaiguri, Bogra, Darjeeling, Murshidabad and Goalpara in Assam.

In the preliminary registration in 1913, seventeen gangs were found in North Bengal, totalling 241 adults. Of the 17 gangs found in North Bengal in the beginning of 1913, of 111 male and 131 female adults, 99 of the former and 86 of the latter had

convictions for non-bailable offences, or in bad-livelihood cases arising from non-bailable offences; in other words 89 per cent. of the males and 66 per cent. of the female adults, or 76 per cent. of the total of male and female adults had been convicted in such cases. The illustrations facing page 80 show types of the Karwal Nuts found in North Bengal.

The Government of India have now ordered that the Karwal Nuts in Bengal should be settled under section 12 of the Criminal Tribes Act, and a plot of land has been acquired at Saidpur in the Rangpur district on which buildings are under construction for the settlement which is to be under the management of the Salvation Army.

KEPMARIS OR INAKORAVARS.

The following account of the Kepmaris, also known as Koravars or Inakoravars, is reproduced by kind permission from a memorandum on the Criminal Tribes of the Madras Presidency prepared for the Government of Madras by Mr. P. B. Thomas, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Railways and Criminal Intelligence Department, Madras :—

“These people form a fraternity rather than a caste in that it is possible for a person not born a Kepmari to belong to it; and it is a regular practice for them to kidnap and even to buy female children, who are married to the Kepmari boys. Such children are always of the better castes and never Pariahs. Male children are seldom or never kidnapped or admitted to the tribe. They are generally known as Kepmaris, Alagiris, Koravars, Ena-Koravars. They call themselves Uliyakarans, Servagarans or Palaya Karans, but pass themselves off under many names. They are a branch of the great Koravar tribe and are mentioned as such in

Ethnology and different classes.

Thurston's "Castes and Tribes of Southern India," Vol. III, page 439, but they deny this, and resent being called Koravars.

"The whole tribe are real criminals, and none of them
 Criminality. work for a living. The men are house-breakers, pick-pockets and expert thieves. The women are without exception thieves, and the children are expert thieves at the early age of seven years.

"The women are not prostitutes, and the tribe is a small, well-defined fraternity, of which we possess a fairly accurate record. There is no community in the Presidency which is a better instance of a genuine Criminal Tribe and to which the application of the Criminal Tribes Act is more justifiable.

"The tribe is distributed into several gangs, the mem-
 Kepmari gangs. bers of which intermarry. These gangs differ from the ordinary nomadic criminal gangs in that they all belong to some permanent settlement where members of the gang have houses, and to which they return at regular intervals. It is very rarely that any member of the tribe commits crime anywhere in the vicinity of these settlements, where they pose as respectable people. They are educated and expert thieves, using the railways and the post offices freely, and committing crime on the railway, in towns, and at festivals and other gatherings all over the Presidency whenever opportunity offers.

* * * * *

"The principal settlement of the tribe is at Edayapatti,
 Principal settlement. in the limits of Thogamalai police-station, Trichinopoly district. The total number of the tribe belonging to this place is 208, but we only have finger-prints of 71 at present. The village of Edayapatti consists of about 25 houses, of which 13 belong to Kepmaris. The houses are

indistinguishable from those of the other villagers. Several families live in each house, and own a share of it. This practice is due to the fact that, on an average, half the community are absent on marauding expeditions or in jail. A house is never left empty, one or more of the part-owners and his family always being in occupation. Of the above 208 persons, including men, women and children, 105 have been criminally convicted and 52 bound over under the security sections, the total number of convictions standing against them being 260 and the total number of security cases 107. It is only in rare cases that these persons find security when bound over for good behaviour. They prefer to go to jail.

“The members of this tribe are not wretched outcasts of extreme poverty or people who have been driven into crime by force of circumstances. They are educated, dress and live extremely well, and are acquainted with several languages (Telugu, Canarese, Tamil, Hindustani and occasionally English—it is indeed only in very rare instances that a Kepmari does not know at least three of these languages).”

Declaration under the
Criminal Tribes Act.

The Thogamalai Koravars were proclaimed under the Criminal Tribes Act in June 1913 by the Government of Madras.

With the extension of railways, the settlements and fields of operations of this tribe have extended, and they are now to be found in Bombay, Bengal and the United Provinces, sometimes settling and following the profession of *pujaries*, and curers of piles. A great many railway thefts committed on the Puri line in 1898 were found to be the work of Kepmaris or Koravars.

About 1904 large gangs of them were found in the Cuttack and Puri districts, then in Bengal, but now in the province of Bihar and Orissa. Their

Operations in Puri and
Cuttack.

custom there when they first settled was to move about in gangs in different directions, returning to Cuttack to dispose of their booty.

Mr. Paupa Rao Naidu, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Madras, states in his book : "The History of Railway Thieves," the first edition of which was published in 1904, that some of them were settled in Calcutta and Bombay, and even further north as far as Patna and Delhi.

Mr. Paupa Rao Naidu describes them as expert railway thieves, who steal bags, bundles and small boxes from waiting rooms, platforms and carriages. They substitute bags or bundles filled with useless rags for passengers' luggage of similar external appearance containing valuables. When alighting with a stolen bag at a station short of that for which his ticket is purchased, the Koravar takes refuge in the latrine until the train has gone, and if questioned by railway or police officials, pretends great distress at his misfortune in losing the train. The Koravars often follow the methods of the Bhamptas in cutting open bags and breaking boxes in carriages on night journeys, but, as a rule, prefer to work on platforms and waiting halls.

According to Mr. Naidu, they sometimes travel with the appearance of prosperity and respectability, the men wearing silk-bordered Conjeevaram or Coimbatore cloths, and their women Koranadu cloths and bodices.

MALLAHS AND OTHER RIVER CRIMINALS.

The term Mallah as used here is purely an occupational one and is applied to those

The term Mallah defined. who work on rivers as traders, boatmen or fishermen. It must not be taken as applicable only to a particular class

or caste of watermen, nor to those from any particular district or province. It includes numerous castes, many of which are undoubtedly criminal by habit, others being free from any particular tendencies to crime, if we set aside the supposition accepted by Mr. Quarry in his note on river criminals that the river tribes generally have a bad reputation.

There is no form of crime in which the police figures are less reliable than river crime. The reason is not far to seek. When a man is robbed in

River crime not properly reported.

the course of a boat journey he is generally on his way from one place to another on business of importance, and cannot afford to add to his misfortune the delay which would be unavoidable for reporting his case to a possibly distant police-station and attending an enquiry in which he would stand little chance of any recompense, for river robbers, after committing a crime, generally lose no time in putting as much space of water as possible between themselves and the scene of occurrence. It has been estimated that not 50 per cent. of the crime committed on the rivers is reported, and I am inclined to regard this as a moderate statement of the case. I should say quite 75 per cent. of crime committed on the water highways is left unreported.

Every year several thousands of boats from the United Provinces and Bihar come down the Ganges to Bengal with crews, which include Pasis, Chamars, Pal-

Regular influx of boats from up-country.

war Dusadhs, Bhurs, and other criminal classes. As each of the recognized criminal castes of the United Provinces and Bihar is being dealt with in a separate chapter, it is necessary here only to indicate roughly the manner in which the river criminals invade Bengal and their principal places of resort. Mr. C. W. C. Plowden, C.I.E., estimated in 1913 that there were at least 6,000 known criminal Mallahs from up-country,

wandering about Bengal. Now though the greater portion of the boatmen who come down from the United Provinces and Bihar are honest traders and carriers, many boats come down with a selected criminal crew, crime being the main object of their expedition, though they supplement it by perfectly honest trade as a cloak for their more evil intentions.

They make long journeys down the Ganges, some times proceeding even as far as Chittagong and the Sundarbans, down the Bhagirathi, Bhagmati and other rivers towards Calcutta, Jessore and Nadia; up the Brahmaputra and Megna into the districts of Assam, and up the tributaries of the Brahmaputra into the forests of Cooch Behar and Alipur Doars, whence they bring down timber for disposal at depôts in Bengal. These up-country Mallahs generally leave their homes about the month of August, but individual members of the crew frequently journey to and from their homes by train, joining or leaving the boats at the various centres for up-country criminals in Bengal. The following are their favourite centres:—

Halting places.

Dhubri (Goalpara district, Assam).
 Jatrapore (Rangpur district).
 Phulchari (Rangpur district).
 Goalundo (Faridpur district).
 Pangsa (Faridpur district).
 Bhairab Bazar (Mymensingh district).
 Narainganj (Dacca district).
 Serajganj (Pabna district).
 Khoksha (Nadia district).
 Kushtia (Nadia district).
 Poradah (Nadia district).
 Mirpur (Nadia district).
 Damukdia (Nadia district).
 Saraghat (Pabna district).
 Azimganj (Murshidabad district).

Though some of these Mallahs remain in Bengal with their boats all the year round, the majority return to their homes in the spring of the year. Colonies of up-country men are found at nearly every important place of call on the high water-ways of Bengal, and every such colony contains representatives of the criminal castes of the United Provinces. The up-country river criminals do not confine themselves to crime on the water, and sometimes will travel to a considerable distance from the river bank to commit land burglaries. The Pasis, members of which caste are frequently included in a criminal crew, are exceptionally clever at cutting *sindhs*.

Money stolen is frequently remitted home by money-order. Jewellery is disposed of to the local receivers, or broken up and kept in concealment to be disposed of on return home, to the regular receivers there.

Disposal of stolen property.

Though the United Provinces furnish the majority of the foreign river criminals exploiting Bengal, Bihar supplies the very formidable and troublesome Banfars (*vide* Chapter 2, Part II). But crime on the rivers in Bengal is by no means confined to up-country criminals. The Sandars and Gains (*vide* Chapters 6 and 11, Part I), belong exclusively to Bengal, and are criminals without any pretence of honest occupation, and among the river-side population of the district of Bakarganj hundreds of persons are found, who, though possessing other means of livelihood, are habitually addicted to crime on the rivers when opportunity offers.

In 1913 a note on up-country river criminals was issued by Mr. P. Quarry, Superintendent of Police, which furnishes considerable detail of the methods of up-country river criminals and their resorts in Bengal.

In 1904 Mr. P. B. Bramley, then Superintendent of Police on special duty in connection with the enquiry into inter-provincial crime in the United Provinces,

Bengal and Assam, dealt with the question of river crime in Bengal very elaborately, and his report on inter-provincial crime contains much valuable information on the subject.

CHAIN MALLAHS.

The Chain Mallahs reside principally in the districts of Mirzapur, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Gorakhpur, Ballia and Azamgarh, in

Residence.

the United Provinces. Their presence in Bengal should be looked for between September and the *Holi* festival, and again between the end of March and the breaking of the rains. They practise various forms of theft, including the snatching of ornaments from the persons of women and children, and pocket-picking, using for the

Methods of crime.

latter a little knife or sharp piece of glass, with which they cut pockets, bags or the little knots in which the people of the country tie up their valuables in their clothing. Chain Mallahs do not commit house-breaking as a rule. Individual Chain Mallahs brought before the police in recent years often show a series of convictions under section 379 and the bad-livelihood sections, extending over a number of years, in various districts of Bengal, Bihar and the United Provinces.

Mr. C. W. C. Plowden, C.I.E., describes them as

Resemblance with Barwars and Sanaurhiyas.

resembling in their methods the Barwars, Sanaurhiyas and Bhamptas. Regarding their habits, he writes

as follows :—

“So far as I have been able to observe the habits of the Chain Mallahs who visit Bengal, they restrict themselves to picking pockets and usually act alone. They arrive in batches at some central spot, such as Natore, Narayanganj or Serajganj, and then split up, visiting *hâts* and places where a crowd is

likely to collect. When arrested, they invariably give a false name and address and pretend to be half-witted. They frequently describe

Call themselves Noonias when arrested.

themselves as Noonias, and there is, in fact, a sub-caste of Noonias

who bear the name Chain. When wandering about alone they sleep in the open under a tree. In one case, in which a Chain Mallah was arrested, it was ascertained that he had slept under a tree just outside the town. On digging up the place a bag was found containing some rupees and small pieces of silver. Although these people, when in Pengal, appear to act singly, it is important to

Expedition in batches.

remember that the arrest of a Chain Mallah indicates the presence of several others, and therefore immediately a Chain Mallah is arrested no time should be lost in conveying the information to all police-stations within the district, as well as to neighbouring districts and the Government Railway Police, and a combined search should be made for the rest of the gang."

The records of conviction in Eastern Bengal show that the majority of the Chain Mallahs arrested in Bengal come from Ballia, Jaunpur and Gorakhpur.

The districts generally visited by them in Bengal are Rajshahi, Pabna, Bogra, Rang-

Field of operation in Bengal.

pur and Dacca. They have very few convictions south of the Ganges.

In 1910 a Gang case under section 401, Indian Penal Code, was instituted against the Chain Mallahs of Ballia, and 37 of them were convicted.

In 1904 Mr. Bramley wrote: "The Mallahs in the districts of Muttra, Agra and Aligarh are an exactly similar criminal group. Although

An exactly similar group living in Agra, Muttra and Aligarh.

they disclaim any connection with the Chain Mallahs, their criminal methods as pick-pockets are very similar, and they



have a tradition that they originally migrated from Ballia. They have a different field of operation, as their convictions are found to be in Calcutta and the surrounding districts, besides in the United Provinces districts."

The Mallahs of Muttra, Agra and Aligarh frequently pass themselves off as *Thakurs* and *Banias*, and, like the Chain Mallahs, give false names and addresses when arrested.

In 1914 certain Mallahs in the Aligarh, Agra, Bulandshahr and Muttra districts, and the Chain Mallahs of Ballia and Gorakhpur and Mirzapur districts of the United Provinces were declared to be a Criminal Tribe (*vide* United Provinces Notification No. 728—VIII-158, 3—15th April 1914.

(Gorakhpur)	265—VIII,	5th February 1914.
(Ballia)	267—VIII,	5th " "
(Bulandshahr and Muttra).	263—VIII,	5th " "
(Agra)	259—VIII,	5th " "
(Aligarh)	390—VIII,	20th " "
(Mirzapur)	261—VIII,	5th " "

MINKAS.

The Minkas (female Minkini), or Madaris, are a vagrant Muhammadan sect whose headquarters are in the Gangpur Feudatory State in Bihar and Orissa.

According to an account of the Minkas given in a special supplement to the Bihar and Orissa, *Criminal Intelligence Gazette*, dated the 9th October 1914, they are believed to have migrated to Gangpur from Bilaspur and Raipur in the Central Provinces, about 50 years ago. Part of the tribe still remains in the Central Provinces, known by the name of "Madari" or "Gaduri."

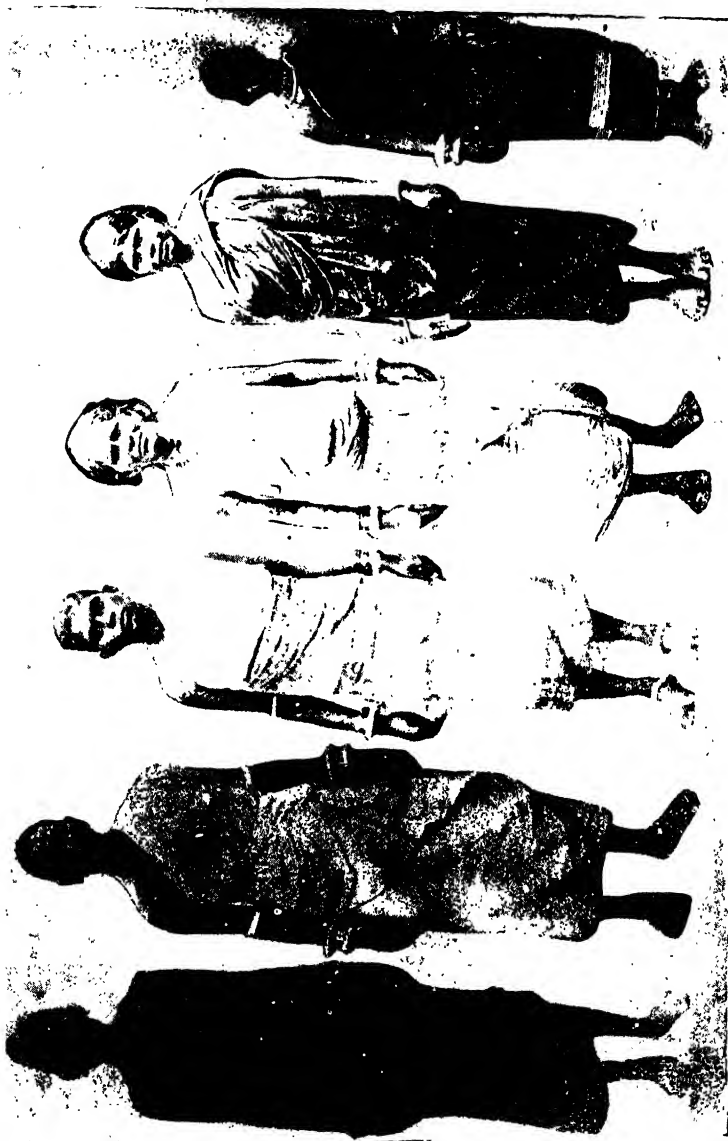
The Minkas are not shown as a distinct class in the census of 1911, and are presumably included among other Muhammadans. Approximately the number of them in the Gangpur State is less than 200 adults. They are a distinct community and do not intermarry with other Muhammadans.

They drink intoxicating liquors and the women are of loose morals. Ostensibly the men derive their means of support from begging and juggling, but the main source of income for the support of the families, which wander about the distant countries during the greater part of the year, is theft, in which the men take a minor part, the women and young girls being the experts.

The male Minkas are described as wild-looking men of non-Aryan type with long hair and dark complexions, though some cut their hair and resemble ordinary low class Muhammadans. They are generally strongly built and well nourished. They sometimes wear the *lungi* and coat worn in Eastern Bengal, and carry with them the common paraphernalia of the itinerant Indian juggler.

The women are of average height and build and are wiry and active. They tattoo their hands and faces, and wear common silver ornaments, and glass bangles and beads round their necks. They wear their clothes in the style of Bengal, often in the fashion peculiar to the eastern districts, in order that they may pose as natives of Bengal.

Among themselves they speak corrupt Mahrathi, but are generally able to converse in Hindi, Uriya and Bengali. Like most of the itinerant criminal tribes, they leave their homes after the Dasahara, and remain abroad frequently until the beginning of the rainy season. They travel considerable distances in parties of ten or twelve, using



the railway when possible, and never going very far away from it. These gangs of ten or twelve split up into smaller parties, with a central meeting place. They generally work in the neighbourhood of a railway station. Their favourite forms of crime are shop-lifting, pocket-picking and snatching property left on the bank by bathers at bathing ghâts. The women are quick and skilful thieves, and property once lifted is quickly transferred along a string of confederates until it reaches the men, whose business it is to conceal and dispose of it. Gold and silver ornaments when stolen are sold or melted down as quickly as possible, but stolen clothes are usually sewn up in the quilts and other articles of bedding belonging to the gang. They frequently barter stolen articles for drink at liquor shops. Though Muhammadans, the Minkini women generally assume Hindu names.

When arrested, they give varying accounts of themselves and generally pose as homeless wanderers.

Field of operation. The Minkas and Minkinis seldom commit crime in the Gangpur State, but their criminal operations extend over most parts of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Assam. Members of the tribe have been convicted of theft or bound down under section 109 in Nadia, Birbhum, Hooghly, Burdwan, 24-Parganas, Jalpaiguri, Siliguri, Rajshahi, Darjeeling, Chittagong, Dinajpur, Murshidabad and Mymensingh in Bengal, also in Tejpur and Goalpara in Assam.

PASIS.

The Pasis are a low caste of Hindus found in the eastern districts of the United Provinces, in Oudh, and certain districts of Bihar. Their original occupation was the tapping of palm trees for the extraction of *tari*,

^{Residence and occupation.}

and the caste-name is derived from the word *pasa*, the sling or noose used by them in climbing the trees. Many of them still follow this occupation, but others have taken to cultivation and day labour, while others are known as makers and vendors of grindstones, and others as servants or petty shop-keepers. Like other low caste Hindus they eat meat, including the flesh of pigs, and drink intoxicating liquors. Generally they bear a bad reputation.

In 1914 the Government of the United Provinces proclaimed under the Criminal Tribes Act all the Pasis convicted of non-bailable offences in certain villages of the districts of Rai Bareilly, Unao, Mirzapur, Fyzabad, Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Allahabad and Para l'anki (see *United Provinces Gazette* Notification Nos. 168, 173, 178, 184, 188, 193, 198, 213, 208—VIII-158-5, dated the 7th March 1914; and by another Notification No. 114—VIII, dated the 31st January 1913, all Pasis, whether convicted or not, of nine villages in the Rai Bareilly district).

Like the Bhurs and other criminal castes of the United Provinces, the Pasis have been attracted in large numbers to the labour centres of Bengal. They are found working in the mills round about Calcutta, in the coal mines of the Burdwan district, and at all labour centres of Rangpur, Pabna, Dacca and Mymensingh, and as *mallahs* on the up-country boats plying in the Bengal rivers. They rarely settle in Bengal for any length of time, as do the Bhurs and Dusadhs, and are regarded as more confirmed and dangerous criminals than either of these.

The Pasis are referred to in the chapter on River Crime as experts in burglary. Their record in Bengal includes dacoity, burglary, robbery and theft. Members of the caste have been convicted in the districts of

PASIS.

Jessore, Faridpur, Rangpur, Nadia, Midnapore, Burdwan, Dacca, Mymensingh and all the districts round about Calcutta.

In 1903 Mirzapur Pasis were convicted of burglary and river thefts in the district of Goalpara in Assam. Between 1904 and 1909 three gang cases were successfully instituted against Pasis in the 24-Parganas district. These gangs had been particularly active in the neighbourhood of Barrackpore and Naihati, where the members were employed in the mills.

Pasis are rarely found in Bengal without some ostensible means of livelihood, and they frequently reside in the cooly lines of the firms or railways by which they are employed. They are experts in cutting *sindhs*, and generally resort to violence when molested.

Though they sometimes dispose of stolen property to local receivers in and round about Calcutta, Mr. P. B.

Their supporters. Bramley in 1904 wrote: "There is a mass of evidence to show that such men work with the zemindars and even the police of their home districts at their backs, and instead of settling down in Bengal they return every year and share the loot."

The Pasis are particularly staunch in their fidelity to to one another, and the police rarely succeed in inducing a Pasi to act as informer against other Pasis.

There are no marked peculiarities of personal appearance.

In 1910 the United Provinces Police published a remarkable account of a colony of dangerous criminal Pasis in the Mawai and Ram Sanahighat police-stations of the Bara Banki district, which was reproduced in the Bengal *Criminal Intelligence Gazette* of the 8th July 1910. The members of this colony are described as unlike the ordinary Pasi, being fair-skinned and in

A colony of dangerous criminal Pasis.

appearance like high caste Hindus. The men pass themselves off as priests, the women acting as decoys, and thus they lure victims away to bathe in secluded spots declared by the pseudo-priests to be specially holy, and then rob them, resorting to drugging and murder, if necessary, to accomplish their object.

In a search of the house of one member of this gang, over 2 seers of poisons of various kinds were found. One of these is described by the Chemical Examiner as looking like a dry twig, a small piece of which inserted under the skin of a frog caused instantaneous death.

But this colony appears to differ widely from the common Pasis found in Bengal, whose criminal exploits are generally confined to dacoity, burglary and theft.

MUZAFFARPUR SONARS.

The criminal community known as the Muzaffarpur Sonars is apparently only a section of the large Sonar caste, the hereditary gold and silversmiths of Bihar and the United Provinces.

The Muzaffarpur Sonars have earned their distinction as a separate class by the professional practice of a form of swindling known as the *bala* trick, but, apart from this, they do not differ in social or religious customs or in dress and dialect from the other Sonars of the Tirhut Division.

Formerly the majority of the swindling Sonars lived in certain villages near the sadar station of the Muzaffarpur district, but as their exploits became well known to the police to avoid surveillance and prosecution they removed themselves in large numbers to villages near the Nepal Frontier, in the jurisdiction of police-station

Origin.

Muzaffarpur Sonars defined.

Residence.

Their emigration to Nepal frontier.



Majorgunge and later on, for similar reasons, many of them moved across the border into the Nepal Terai, and took up their abode in the following villages :—

Bhagwanpur, Lachimpur, Balra, Arnaha, Mirzapur, Madhubani, Rohua, Sisant, Harpurwa and Gorahia.

The Sonars are said to enjoy a regular system of protection under the local zemindars, whereby the family of a Sonar in jail, or out on a prolonged criminal expedition, receives a regular monthly allowance. The money thus laid out by the zemindar is realized with heavy interest from the Sonar criminals when they return from successful expeditions.

In 1914 the Nepal Durbar decided to place a rigid surveillance over the Sonars, and undertook to inform the Criminal Investigation Departments of Bengal and Bihar and Orissa of any cases of absence without passports. The Resident in Nepal, Colonel Manners-Smith, wrote in August 1914 :—

“The Durbar have decided to keep the Sonars in future under strict surveillance, and an attempt will be made to break them of their wandering habits and turn them into cultivators by giving them land sufficient to support themselves and their families.”

The Muzaffarpur Sonars' main source of income is the *bala* trick. They leave their homes in small parties, and one of their favourite fields of operation is the Rajshahi Division of Bengal, which is rendered a profitable field for swindlers by the large number of up-country labourers who pass through Katihar and Parbatipur between their homes and the various labour centres of Bengal and Assam. But they must be watched for in all places where travellers congregate. A Sonar will take up a position in the waiting hall of a railway station and watch for a suitable victim. When a person with the requisite wealth and simplicity is

Modus operandi.

found, the Sonar strikes up an acquaintance and enquires where he is going. "That is just where I am going," says the Sonar on being told the victim's destination. Should the place where he picks up the victim be unsuitable for successful operation, he persuades the victim to walk with him on to the next station. On their way they meet a man coming in the opposite direction, who begs for pecuniary assistance, putting forward the usual plea that he has lost his money and been left with nothing but a silver *bala*. Gold *balas* are sometimes used if it suits the occasion. The swindler, who is accompanying the victim, discusses the price of the *bala*, questioning the purity of the metal. It sometimes happens that during the argument another man appears, and, introducing himself into the discussion as a Sonar, offers to test the metal by fire. As the *balas* first shown are of real silver or gold, they stand the test upon which the swindler, who is playing companion to the victim, says he is anxious to buy them, but his servant has gone on with his money. Then he suggests that the victim shall either buy them himself or lend him the money, keeping the *balas* as security until they reach the next station and find his servant. As soon as the money is paid over, the seller disappears. Then the victim's friend expressing anxiety to redeem the *balas* without delay goes on ahead to find his servant, and his companions, if he has any, one by one leave the victim, generally on the excuse of easing themselves.

The complainant being in possession of the *bala* at first feels no anxiety at their disappearance, but when he pauses to examine his *bala* closely, he finds it is not the article originally shown, but a substitute of lead or other inferior metal.

Though the Muzaffarpur Sonars generally work about railway stations, there are instances of their hiring houses in secluded places or opening petty shops in the

Methods used on unwilling victims.

neighbourhood in which they intend to practise their swindles. They have in some cases been known to use violence to their victims when they have found them suspicious and disinclined to part with their money, and in some cases they have given their victims drugged tobacco or *pan* to facilitate the working of the swindle. A small percentage of the fraternity have convictions for theft, and there have been a few instances of highway robbery committed by them.

It must not be understood that the *bala* swindler is always necessarily a Muzaffarpur Sonar. There have been instances on record in which men of other castes, Muhammadans, Dusadhs, Mundas and Kurmis have played this trick. One or two active gangs of *bala* swindlers are believed to exist in Monghyr, and the Nuias of Champaran and Nepal have been found practising this form of crime.

A variation of this swindle known as the *tapka* trick, in which a gilded bangle of base metal is dropped in the road by a confederate and picked up by the swindler, who accompanies the victim, has in very rare instances been practised by the Muzaffarpur Sonars, but is more usually the method of swindlers from the Punjab and United Provinces, notably Ghazipur.

The Muzaffarpur Sonars remain absent from home for more than half the year, generally returning to their homes for the *Holi* festival or the rainy season. The women never accompany the men on their expeditions. Almost every member has innumerable *aliases* in his own and his father's name, and certain names are so common among them that identification by name and father's name alone is very unreliable. When arrested, they generally call themselves Goalas, Koiris or Banias.

They sometimes extend their swindling operations to districts of the United Provinces, particularly Ballia, Gorakhpur and Azamgarh, but Bihar and Bengal are their favourite fields of operation. In the latter province they are frequently found about the following places :—Asansol, Sitarampur, Burdwan, Bandel, Goalundo, Parbatipur, Saidpur, Lalmonirhat and Kharagpur. They have also been found in Sylhet, Puri and Darjeeling. In 1913 a colony of about 20 of them was found in Alipur Duars in the district of Jalpaiguri, where they doubtless found dupes among the tea garden employees. In the majority of cases reported in Bengal, the dupes are men of other provinces.

SANAURHIYAS.

Sanaurhiyas are a caste of itinerent thieves, similar in habits to the Barwars, of whom they are perhaps an off-shoot, generally residing in Jhansi in the United Provinces, Orcha and Datia in Bundelkhund, and Bilaspur in the Central Provinces. They claim Brahmanical origin, and are generally called Sanaurhiya Brahmans.

According to Mr. S. W. Gayer of the Central Provinces Police, they work in gangs consisting of from 2 to 15 or 20 men, under a leader known as *Mukhia* or *Mukhtiar*, a person who generally keeps in the back ground, while the *Upardars*, each of whom has under him one or more boys styled *Chawa*, perform the actual thieving.

Sanaurhiyas are never accompanied by their women when out on their expeditions. They set out in the early cold weather and return to their homes at the approach of the rains.

Their methods of thieving are very similar to those of Barwars and Bhamptas, operations being carried on at fairs, bathing places, railway stations and in running trains.

Mr. Gayer refers to their tricks for inducing a person whom they wish to rob to bathe. The *Chawa* apparently by accident will touch some high caste man with something that causes pollution. The *Upardar* will politely draw attention to it. Sometimes the *Chawa* running along collides with the victim, and begs forgiveness, pleading he is only a poor ignorant sweeper. In either case the high caste victim is obliged to bathe.

Mr. A. G. Hankin, writing in 1893, described a trick of the Sanaurhiyas for diverting the attention of women guarding the property of men who are bathing. The *Upardar* proceeds to sit down and ease himself in a position which compels the woman to turn her back on the property she is guarding, whereupon the *Chawa* stealthily removes anything he fancies. Mr. Gayer says that, when stealing in running trains they sometimes stick a stolen article underneath the seat with the help of a bit of beeswax or some other convenient adhesive.

Chandrawedis appear to be an extension of the Sanaurhiyas from a distinct class to a criminal fraternity, to which any caste of Hindus (except sweepers and Chamars), and even Muhammadans, are admitted. Thus while a Sanaurhiya may be a Chandrawedi, a Chandrawedi is not necessarily a Sanaurhiya.

There are not many cases of capture of Sanaurhiyas or Chandrawedis in Bengal, and apparently they have not yet exploited the province as extensively as the Barwars.

The Sanaurhiyas of Jhansi have been declared by the Government of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (Government Order No. 1266—VIII-158-11, dated the 1st October 1913) to be a criminal tribe under Act III of 1911.

Declaration under the
Criminal Tribe Act.

INDEX.

	PAGE.
Arsenic—	
Wrapped in plaintain leaf for cattle-poisoning, used by Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis	26
Bagdis—	
Addicted to robbery and dacoity	9
Divided into 11 sub-castes	8
Do not eat beef	9
Are expert lathials	<i>ib.</i>
Experts in scaling walls	<i>ib.</i>
Join, Podes, Kaoras and Muhamnadans in crime	8
Occupation of—	9
Places inhabited by—	<i>ib.</i>
Religion of—	8
Bagli <i>sindh</i>—	
Magahiya Doms cut—	70
Bagri or Bagaria, <i>see</i> Marwari Bauriyas	47
Baid Musalmans—	
Disguise themselves as Hindu <i>sadhus</i>	37
Field of operation of—	39
<i>Modus operandi</i> in swindling by—	37
Origin of—	<i>ib.</i>
Pretend to have power to turn base metal into gold	38
Residence of—	37
Bala trick—	
Practised particularly by Muzaffarpur Sonars	99
Also occasionally practised by Muhamnadans, Dusadhs, Mundas, Kurmis and Nunias	101
Banfars—	
Caste of—	40
Commit river dacoity	<i>ib.</i>
Field of criminal operation of—	41
How dispose of stolen property	42
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	41
Occupation of—	40

	PAGE.
Banfars—concl'd.	
Personate Police or Customs officer for stopping and searching a boat	42
Residence of—	40
Bansphor Doms—	
Distinction between—and Magahiya Doms ...	71
Occupation of—	<i>ib.</i>
Origin of—	<i>ib.</i>
Bara Bhagiya Muchis—	
How distinguished from Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis ...	25
Barwars—	
Boys travel with gangs of—and steal	44
Caste of—	43
Commit thefts at railway stations, steamer ghâts, bathing places, fairs, etc.	<i>ib.</i>
Commit thefts from running trains	44
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	42
Disguise themselves as they move about and assume any disguise that suits them	43
Have a language of signs	46
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	43
Origin of—	42
Places where—are frequently found	46
Religion and habits of—	43
Residence of—	<i>ib.</i>
Bathing ghâts—thefts at, <i>see</i> Barwars, Minkas, Sanaur- hiyas	43, 95, 102
Bead swindling—	
Practised by Magahiya Dom women	70
Beads, wooden strings of, worn round neck, <i>see</i> Dhekarus	12
Bediyas—	
Brahmans do not act as priests of—	2
Caste of—	1
Commit thefts and burglaries, but not dacoity ...	2
Dialect of —contains many Hindi words	1
Disposal of stolen property by—	2
Have no regular caste occupation, but will not beg even when pressed with extreme poverty ..	2

Begging—

Aversion of Bediyas to—	...	...	2
Is the occupation of Minkas	...	...	94
Karwal Nuts steal under guise of—	...	...	83
Chhapparbands travel in guise of mendicants	...	...	61

Bhamptas—

Caste of—	...	...	49
Commit thefts at railway stations, running trains, fairs, places of pilgrimage, etc.	...	...	50
Confederates aid escape, if arrested	...	...	51
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	...	...	54
Disposal of stolen property by—	...	...	52
Are expert railway thieves and pick-pockets	...	50, 51	
Are generally well dressed	...	...	53
Haunts of—in Bengal	...	...	ib.
Language and signals of—	...	...	52
Lie down on the floor of train compartments pretending to make more room for other passengers, but really to steal from bags, etc., kept under the seat	...	...	50
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	...	...	ib.
Residence of—	...	...	49
Religion of—	...	...	ib.
Travel in train to commit theft	...	...	50
Travel even in second class to victimise second class railway passengers	...	...	ib.
Travel in disguise	...	...	53
Tools carried by—for committing theft	...	...	52
Women steal in railway female compartment	...	...	ib.
Worship Kali before a criminal expedition	...	...	49

Bhumij—

Appearance of—described	...	...	4
Carry spears, <i>tangis</i> and swords to commit dacoity	...	...	5
Criminality of—confined to those living in Manbhum and Bankura districts	...	...	4
Ethnology of—and ethnologically connected	...	...	3
Gang of Digambar—brought under the Criminal Tribes Act	...	...	6
* Ill-treat inmates while committing dacoity	...	...	5
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	...	...	ib.
Occupation as cultivators or labourers	...	...	3

	PAGE.
Bhumij—concl.	
Permit polygamy, divorce and widow marriage	3
Peculiar way of disposing of the dead by—	<i>ib.</i>
Record of cases against—	5
Social customs of—	3
Stones thrown by—before committing dacoity	5
Tribal history of—	4
Bhurs—	
Criminality of—	55, 56
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	58
Field of operation of—in Bengal	<i>ib.</i>
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	<i>ib.</i>
Occupation of—	54, 55
Origin of—	54
Places where criminal—live	55
Residence of—	54
Social and religious customs of—	55
On criminal expeditions—sometimes carry measuring rods and baskets	58
Widow marriage permitted by—	55
Boat, criminals who reside in—see Sandars, Gains, Banfars, Mallahs	28, 15, 40, 87
Bohors—name for flotillas of boats—see Sandars	28
Boys used for thieving—see Barwars, Chain Chamars, Kepmaris	44, 65, 85
Branding with hot iron, marks of, usually near navel of Marwari Bauriyas	47
Breaking locks or removing staples, experts in—see Dhekarus	13
Burglars—	
Bediyas	2
Bhurs	58
Chakai Dusadhs	77
Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis	25
Dharhis	67
Dhekarus	13
Karwal Nuts	83
Magahiya Doms	70
Palwar Dusadhs	75
Pasis	96

Burning, torture by—at time of dacoity—Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis	...	...	...	...	26
Byadhs—					
Appearance of—described	...	...	...	...	8
Caste of—	...	...	...	...	6
Language spoken by—	...	...	...	...	8
Occupation of—	...	...	...	...	6
Ostensible mode of living—	...	...	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Swindling by (1) gold mohur trick, or (2) <i>Lakmi's Bhâr</i> , or (3) doubling trick	...	...	...	...	7
Residence of—	...	...	...	...	6
Cattle poisoning—					
By Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis	...	...	...	...	25, 26
By Chhattisgarh Chamars	...	...	...	...	60
Use of arsenic wrapped in plantain leaf for—	...	...	...	...	26
Use of <i>sutdri</i> for—	...	...	...	...	60
Chain Chamars—					
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	...	...	...	...	65
Meaning of the term "Chain"	...	...	...	...	64
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	...	...	...	...	65
Record of criminality of—	...	...	...	...	64
Resemble Chain Mallahs	...	...	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Residence of—	...	...	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Are thieves and women are pick-pockets and swindlers	...	...	...	...	65
Chain Mallahs—					
Addicted to pocket-picking	...	...	...	...	91
Arrest of one member at any place indicates presence of others in the neighbourhood	...	...	...	...	92
Call themselves Nunias when arrested	...	...	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Do not commit burglary	...	...	...	...	91
Field of operation of—in Bengal	...	...	...	...	92
Frequent <i>hâts</i> and crowded places to commit thefts	...	...	...	...	91
Methods of committing crime by—	...	...	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Resemble Barwars and Sanaurhiyas	...	...	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Residence of—	...	...	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Some members declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	...	...	...	...	93
Time of year—most frequently in Bengal	...	...	...	...	91

Chakai Dusadlis—

Addicted to burglary and theft	...	...	77
Field of operation of—	...	...	76
Residence of— ..	...	...	<i>ib.</i>

Chandrawedis—

A class of Sanaurhiyas	103
------------------------	-----	-----	-----

Chhapparbands—

Are counterfeit coiners	...	...	61
Coins manufactured by—poor imitations	...	...	62
Conceal counterfeit coins about private parts and in <i>langotis</i>	...	...	63
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	...	...	61
How indicate to fellow members' route taken	...	...	63
Language spoken by—	...	...	61
Method of uttering counterfeit coin by—	...	...	62, 63
Occupation of—at home	...	...	61
Offer of 17 annas in coppers for a rupee	...	...	63
Process of manufacturing coins by—	...	...	62
Religion of—	...	...	61
Residence of—	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Even swallow bad coin in possession to avoid detection, if arrested	...	...	63

Chhatisgarh Chamars—

Crime committed by—	...	...	59
Commit chiefly house-breaking, but they also commit robbery and dacoity	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Are also cattle poisoners	...	...	60
Hide themselves in cloaks of threaded straw	...	...	59
House-breaking, implement of—described	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Method of disposal of stolen property by—	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Places where—are found in Bengal	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Residence of—	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Use of <i>sutari</i> for cattle poisoning	...	...	60
Work in ballast trains, in mills, in brick-fields, in rail- way construction, etc.	...	...	59, 61

Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis—

As distinguished from Bara Bhagiya Muchis	...	25
Do not travel by rail for committing crime	...	26

Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis—*concl'd.*

Commit burglaries and theft and also dacoity	...	25
Are also cattle poisoners	... ..	<i>ib.</i>
May commit dacoities close to their own houses	...	26
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	... ..	25, 26
<i>Nika</i> and widow marriage permitted by—	...	25
Occupation of—	... ..	<i>ib.</i>
Religion of—	... ..	24
Residence of—	... ..	<i>ib.</i>
Social status of—	... ..	<i>ib.</i>
Short <i>lathis</i> , swords and sacrificial knives used in committing dacoity	... ..	26
Treat inmates cruelly by applying burning torches on body	... ..	<i>ib.</i>
Use of arsenic wrapped in plantain leaf for poisoning cattle	... ..	<i>ib.</i>
Cloaks of threaded straw—		
Chhattisgarh Chamars hide themselves with the help of—	... ..	59
Coiners—		
Chhapparbands	... ..	61
Marwari Bauriyas	... ..	47
Counterfeit coins—		
Chhapparbands keep—concealed in their person and in the <i>langotis</i> they wear	... ..	63
Chhapparbands even swallow—to avoid detection, when arrested	... ..	63
Process of manufacturing—by Chhapparbands	...	62
Uttering of—by Chhapparbands	... ..	<i>ib.</i>
Process of manufacturing and uttering by Marwari Bauriyas	... ..	48
Crime committed by different classes—		
Bagdis commit dacoity and robbery	... ..	9
Baid Musalmans are swindlers	... ..	38
Banfars commit river dacoity	... ..	40
Barwars commit running train thefts and thefts at fairs, ghâts and railway stations	... ..	43
Bhamptas commit thefts from running trains and railway stations	... ..	50
Bhumij commit dacoity	... ..	5
Bhurs commit theft, burglary and dacoity	... ..	58

Crime committed by different classes—*concl'd.*

Bogus Mecca Mowallems swindle intending pilgrims	22
Bediyas commit burglary and theft	2
Byadhs are swindlers	7
Chain Chamars commit thefts	64
Chain Chamar women are swindlers and pick-pockets	65
Chain Mallahs are thieves and pick-pockets ...	91
Chakai Dusadhs commit thefts and burglaries ...	77
Chhapparbanda are coiners	61
Chhattigarh Chamars commit burglary	59
Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis commit theft, burglary, dacoity and cattle poisoning	25
Dharhis commit burglary	67
Dhekarus commit thefts and burglaries	13
Dhekaru women are pick-pockets	ib.
Gains commit robbery and dacoity on river ...	15
Jadua Brahmins swindle by doubling trick ...	77
Kepmaris commit railway thefts	85
Kaoras commit dacoity	8, 10
Karwal Nuts commit theft and burglary	83
Lodhas commit dacoity	16, 17
Magahiya Doms commit burglary, highway robbery and dacoity	69
Mallahs commit crime on river	88
Marwari Bauriyas are coiners	47
Minkas commit thefts, shoplifting and pocket-picking	94
Muzaffarpur Sonars swindle by <i>bala</i> or <i>tapka</i> trick ...	99
Podes commit dacoity	10
Palwar Dusadhs commit every form of crime against property	76
Pasis commit theft, burglary, robbery and dacoity ...	96
Sanaurhiyas commit running train thefts ...	102
Sandars commit dacoity	40
Tuntia Musalmans commit dacoity	20
Defecating in houses after committing burglary— ...	13
See Dhekarus.	

Dharhis—

Caste of—	65
Criminality of—	66

	PAGE.
Dharis—concl'd.	
Crime most addicted to is burglary	67
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	68
Field of criminal operation by—	67
Are also <i>lathials</i>	<i>ib.</i>
<i>Lathis</i> used by—if opposed	68
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	67
Occupation of—	<i>ib.</i>
Origin of—	65
Physique and dress of—	66
Places where—are found	68
Religion and customs of—	65
Residence of—	<i>ib.</i>
Social status of—	66
<i>Sindh-kati</i> is worshipped by—	<i>ib.</i>
Dhekarus—	
Appearance of—	12
Adorn front teeth with gold	<i>ib.</i>
Bore their nostrils.	<i>ib.</i>
Caste of—	<i>ib.</i>
Commit thefts and burglaries and their women pick-pockets.	13
Do not cut <i>sindh</i> , but break locks or staples for committing burglary	<i>ib.</i>
<i>Hâts</i> and <i>mêlas</i> are favourite haunts of—	<i>ib.</i>
Language spoken by—	12
Method of disposal of stolen property by—	14
Origin of—	11
Religion of—	<i>ib.</i>
Residence of—	<i>ib.</i>
Social manners and customs of—	12
Women tattoo faces and arms	<i>ib.</i>
Dhenki—	
Used by Tuntia Musalmans in committing dacoity	21
Disguise—	
Barwars travel in—and commit thefts at railway stations, steamer and bathing ghâts, places of pilgrimage, fairs, etc.	43
Bhamptas travel in—as Mahratta traders, railway contractors, and even as women	53

	PAGE.
Disposal of property—	
Method of—by Banfars 	42
—by Bhamptas 	50
—by Bediyas 	2
—by Chhattisgarh Chamars 	59
—by Dhekarus 	14
—by Mallahs 	90
—by Muzaffarpur Sonars 	99
—by Pasis 	97
—by Sandars 	30
Division of spoil immediately after occurrence—	
Tuntia Musalmans do so 	21
Doubling trick—	
Swindling by—practised by Byadhs 	7
—by Jadua Brahmins 	77
Eating food found in houses while committing crime, and defecating in the house—	
Dhekarus do so 	13
Fastening up doors of neighbours' houses from outside to prevent their coming to assist—	
Tuntia Musalmans do so 	22
Field of criminal operation—	
Of Baid Musalmans 	39
Of Banfars 	41
Of Bediyas 	2
Of Bhamptas 	53
Of Bhurs 	58
Of bogus Mecca Mowalleins 	23
Of Chain Mallahs 	92
Of Chakai Dusadhs 	77
Of Dharhis 	68
Of Gains 	15
Of Kepmaris or Inakoravars 	86
Of Minkas 	96
Of Muzaffarpur Sonars 	99, 102
Of Palwar Dusadhs 	75
Of Sandars 	31
Of Tuntia Musalmans 	20

Gains—

Are almost akin to Sandars	15
Caste of—	14
Criminal—live in boats	15
Commit river dacoity and robbery	<i>ib.</i>
Cut moorings and allow boat to be drifted before committing dacoity	<i>ib.</i>
Divided into two classes	14
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	16
Field of operation of—	15
Make the usual request for fire when approaching a boat to be invaded	<i>ib.</i>
Mode of living of—	<i>ib.</i>
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	<i>ib.</i>
Occupation of—	<i>ib.</i>
Origin of—	14
Social status of—	<i>ib.</i>
<i>Saranga</i> boats used by—in committing dacoity	15

Glass—

Used in cutting pockets by Chain Mallahs	91
Gokl Mohurs, find of—form of swindling practised by Byadh	7

Hâts and Mêlas—

Barwars commit thefts at—	43
Bhamptas commit thefts at—	50
Chain Mallahs commit thefts at—	91
Dhekarus commit thefts at—	13
Sandars—men and women—commit thefts in—	30
Sanaurhiyas steal at—	102

Identifying mark—

of Marwari Bauriyas and women	47
--------------------------------------	----

Inakoravars—

<i>See</i> Kepmaris	84
----------------------------	----

Inmates of houses dacoited cruelly treated—

By Bhumij	5
By Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis	26
Jackal, howling of—imitated by Tuntia Musalmans	22

	PAGE.
Jadua Brahmins—	
Abode of—	77
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	<i>ib.</i>
Practise swindling by doubling trick	<i>ib.</i>
Pretend to have the power to become inviolable	78
Pretend to show Lakshmi to the dupe	<i>ib.</i>
Pretend to discover hidden treasure in house	79
Sometimes appear as <i>pandits</i> of Jagannath, etc.	<i>ib.</i>
Social status of—	77
Kaoras—	
A sub-caste of Haris	11
Act as cooks in European families	<i>ib.</i>
Addicted to dacoity	8, 10
Associate with Bagdis and Podes in crime	11
Rear pigs and prepare molasses	<i>ib.</i>
Social status of —	<i>ib.</i>
Karwal Nuts—	
Appearance of —	81
Commit all forms of crime against property	82
Composition of gangs of —	81
Criminality of—	82
Different classes of—	80
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	80, 81
Do not cut <i>sindh</i> in committing burglary	83
Ethnology of—	79
Gangs of—are generally headed by women	82
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	83
Occupation of —	82
Savage and indecent behaviour of — when opposed	83
Social and religious customs of—	81
Settlement of—under the Criminal Tribes Act	84
Women are equally active with men in crime	83
Worship Kali	81
Kepmaris or Inakoravars—	
Boys are expert thieves	85
Criminality of—	<i>ib.</i>
Different classes of—	84
Are educated and they live and dress well	86

	PAGE.
Kepmaris or Inakoravars—concl'd.	
Ethnology of—	84
Field of operation of—	86
Gangs commit theft on railways	85
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—in railway thefts	87
Resemble Bhamptas in train thefts	ib.
A section declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	86
Women are also thieves	85
Lakshmi's Bhar—	
Finding of —, a form of swindling practised by Byadhs	7
Lathis—	
Short—concealed under armpit by Chhota Bhagiya Muchis	26
Used by Dharhis, if opposed	68
Lathials—	
Bagdis sometimes work as—	9
Dharhis sometimes act as—	67
Lodhas—	
Abode of—	16, 18
A branch of the Bhumij	16
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	17, 18
Occupation and habits of—	18
Origin of—	16
Sometimes work in tea gardens as coolies	19
Tribal history of—	16
Lying down on the floor of train compartment pretending to oblige a passenger, but really to steal from bags, etc., kept under the seat—	
Bhamptas do so	50
Magahiya Doms—	
<i>Bagli sindh</i> cut by—	70
Burglary and highway robbery are favourite forms of crime, though they are also known to commit dacoity	69
Commit several burglaries the same night	70
Criminal tendencies of—	68
Colonies of—in Bengal	72
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	ib
Distinction between—and Bhansphor Doms	71

	PAGE.
Magahiya Doms—concl'd.	
Lead a nomadic life	69
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	70
Origin of—	<i>ib</i>
Peculiar glitter in the eyes of—	<i>ib</i>
Remove ornaments from persons of sleeping women ...	<i>ib</i>
Residence of—	69
Religion and habits of—	71
Usefulness of—in municipalities	69
Women are good looking and well dressed	72
Women practise bead swindling	70
Mallahs—	
Definition of the term	87
Disposal of stolen property by—	90
Halting places in river of—	89
Regular influx of criminal—to Bengal	88
River crime committed by—generally remain un- reported	<i>ib</i>
Some—declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	93
Of Muttra, Agra and Aligarh resemble Chain Mallahs	92
<i>Machi ghono, jal gutao—</i>	
Warning note used by Tuntia Musalmans and others	22
Marriage—	
Nika—permitted by Bediyas	2
————— Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis	25
Widow—permitted by Bagdis except Tentulia section	8
————— Bhumij	3
————— Bhurs	55
————— Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis	25
————— Palwar Dusadhs	75
Marwari Bauriyas—	
Abode of—	47
Are also called Bagri or Bagaria	<i>ib.</i>
Are coiners	<i>ib.</i>
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	49
Divided into seven classes	47
Identifying marks of	<i>ib.</i>
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	48

Marwari Bauriyas—concl'd.

References where to be made for— ... 49

Social customs and dress of— ... 47

Masks—

Wearing of—by Bhumij during crime ... 5

Mecca Mowallems (Bogus)—

Articles carried by— ... 24

Field of operation of— ... 23

Induce people to accompany them to Mecca on pilgrimage and then rob, drug or murder them ... 23

Residence of— ... 22

Minkas—

Appearance of— ... 94

Caste of— ... 93

Field of operation of— ... 95

Generally remain in the vicinity of railway ... *ib.*

Language spoken by— ... 94

Modus operandi of— ... 95

Occupation of— ... 93

Origin of— ... *ib.*

Shop-lifting and pocket-picking by— ... 95

Stealing property of bathers at the ghât ... *ib.*

Women assume Hindu names ... *ib.*

Women are expert thieves ... 94

***Modus operandi* of—**

Of Baid Musalmans ... 37

Of Banfars ... 40

Of Barwars ... 43

Of Bediyas ... 2

Of Bhamptas ... 50

Of Bhumij ... 5

Of Bhurs ... 55

Of Byadhs ... 7

Of Bogus Mecca Mowallems ... 23

Of Chain Chamars ... 65

Of Chain Mallahs ... 91

Of Chhapparbunds ... 62, 63

Of Chhota Bhagiya Muchis ... 25

Of Dharhis ... 67

	PAGE.
<i>Modus operandi of</i> —concl'd.	
Of Dhekarus and Dhekaru women	13
Of Gains	15
Of Jadua Brahmins	77
Of Karwal Nuts	83
Of Kepmaris	87
Of Lodhas	17, 18
Of Marwari Bauriyas	48
Of Magahiya Doms	70
Of Minkas	95
Of Muzaffarpur Sonars	99
Of Sanders	28
Of Sanaurhiyas	102
Of Tuntia Musalmans	21
Moorings cut and boat drifted out—	
Gains do so before committing dacoity	15
Muzaffarpur Sonars—	
Defined	98
Emigrated to Nepal frontier	98
Expedition in crime	101
Field of operation in Bengal	102
Force used on unwilling victims	100, 101
<i>Modus operandi</i> of swindling by—	99
Origin of—	98
Practise swindling by <i>hala</i> trick	<i>ib.</i>
————— by <i>tapka</i> trick also	101
Rajshahi Division is their favourite field of criminal operation.	99
Residence of—in Nepal	<i>ib.</i>
Supported by local zemindars who are their receivers	<i>ib.</i>
Nunias—Chain Mallahs call themselves, when arrested	92
Nostrils bored—	
Dhekarus have both—	12
Offering 17 annas for a rupee and then taking back the annas substituting a bad coin—	
Chhapparbands do so	63
Palwar Dusadhs—	
Are distinct from the ordinary Dusadhs	73
As described by Mr. Bramley	74

	PAGE.
Palwar Dusadhs—concl'd.	
Assume false names while in Bengal	75
Are expert thieves and burglars	72
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act	73
Employed as miners and as railway coolies	75
Eight sub-castes of—	73
Field of operation of—	75
Forms of crime committed by—	76
Origin of—	72
Places where found in Ballia	75
Permit polygamy and widow marriage	74
Religion of—	73
Social status of—	73
Pasis—	
Abode of—	95
Criminality of—	96
Experts in cutting <i>sindh</i>	97
How dispose of stolen property	<i>ib.</i>
Occupation of—	95
—in Bengal	96
Places where—are found in Bengal	97
Their notoriety in mill areas in 24-Parganas	<i>ib.</i>
Proclaimed under the Criminal Tribes Act	96
Never act as informers against other—	97
A distinct class of—described	<i>ib.</i>
Pretence of turning silver into gold—	
Baid Musalmans make for swindling people	38
Jadua Brahmins	79
Personating Police or Custom Officer for stopping and searching a boat or for committing dacoity—	
Banfars do so	42
Pick-pockets—	
Bhamptas	50
Chain Chamar women	65
Chain Mallahs	91
Dhekaru women	13
Minkas	95
Pilgrimage, inducing persons to embark on for Mecca and then rob— <i>sée</i> bogus Mecca Mowalléms	23

	PAGE.
Places of pilgrimage—	
Barwars commit thefts at—	43
Bhamptas—	50
Podes—	
As described by Risley	10
Divided into four sub-castes	<i>ib.</i>
Co-operate in crime with Bagdis and Kaoras	8, 10
Criminal—live in Diamond Harbour Subdivision:	<i>ib.</i>
Dacoit—gangs of—live in Diamond Harbour	<i>ib.</i>
Occupation of—	<i>ib.</i>
Origin of—	<i>ib.</i>
Religion of—	<i>ib.</i>
Social status of—	<i>ib.</i>
Polygamy—	
Permitted by the Bhumiij	3
————— Palwar Dusadhis	74
Railway thefts—	
Barwars commit—in running trains and at railway stations	43
Bhamptas	50
Kepmaris	85
Sanaurhiyas	102
Minkas commit crime generally in the vicinity of railway stations	95
Rasooas—	
Receivers of Sandars are so-called—	30
Rectum. Counterfeit coins concealed in cavity in —see	
Chhapparbands	60
Removing ornaments from persons of women—	
Chain Mallahs do so	91
Lodhas do so during dacoity	18
Magahiya Doms do so during burglary	70
Removing plough-shares for forcing open doors and boxes—	
Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis do so	26
Request for fire before committing river dacoity—	
Banfars do so	42
Gains do so	15
Sandars do so	29

River dacoity, <i>see</i> Banfars, Gains, Sandars, Mallahs	40, 87, 29
Route taken by Chhapparbunds—	
How indicated to fellow-members	63, 64
Is indicated by an earthen mound with an arrow marked, etc.	63
Running train thefts—	
Committed by Barwars	44
————— Bhampas	50
————— Sanaurhiyas	102
Sacrificial knives—	
Sometimes used by Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis in committing dacoity	26
Sanaurhiyas—	
Abode of—	102
Commit thefts at fairs, bathing ghâts, railway stations and in running trains	<i>ib.</i>
Chandrawedis are an extension of—	103
Declared under the Criminal Tribes Act...	<i>ib.</i>
Have not much exploited Bengal	<i>ib.</i>
Meaning of Mukhia, Upardar and Chawa	102
Method of the Upardar and Chawa	103
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—are similar to those of the Bhampas and Barwars	102
Organization of gangs of—	<i>ib.</i>
Origin of—	<i>ib.</i>
Sandars—	
Caste of—	27
Carry no trade except hawking cheap fancy articles	<i>ib.</i>
Commit dacoities upstream and row downstream 10 or 20 miles to meet <i>bohors</i>	29
Disposal of stolen property by—to Rasooas	30
Field of criminal operation	31
Live in boats from April to November	28
Move about in <i>bohors</i> in boats which have a torpedo-shaped covering	28
<i>Modus operandi</i> in dacoity	29
Occupation of—	27
Origin of—	<i>ib.</i>

Sandars—*concl'd.*

Personal appearance and dress of—	...	...	31
Religion of—	...	...	27
Residence of—	...	...	<i>ib.</i>
Are also thieves and burglars	...	...	30
Take only cash	...	...	29

Sindh—

Bediyas are expert in cutting—	...	...	2
Pasis ditto ditto	...	...	90, 97

Sindh-kati—

Worshipped by Dharhis	66
-----------------------	-----	-----	----

Slang words—

Used by Bediyas	3
-----------------	-----	-----	---

Snake-charmers—

Dhekarus sometimes act as—	13
----------------------------	-----	-----	----

Snatching ornaments from persons of women and boys—

Chain Mallahs do so	91
---------------------	-----	-----	----

Social rites—

Of Bediyas are performed by their village elders	...	...	2
And customs of Bagdis	...	...	8, 9
—of Bhumij	...	...	3
—of Bhurs	...	...	55
—of Chhota Bhagiya Muchis	...	...	25
—of Dharhis	...	...	65
—of Dhekarus	...	...	12
—of Karwal Nuts	...	...	81
—of Marwari Bauriyas	...	...	47

Social status—

Of Bagdis	...	...	9
Of Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis	...	...	24
Of Dharhis	...	...	66
Of Gains	...	...	14
Of Jadua Brahmins	...	...	77
Of Kaoras	...	...	11
Of Palwar Dusadhs	...	...	73
Of Podes	...	...	10
Of Tuntia Musahmans	...	...	19

	PAGE.
Spreading a wet <i>chadar</i> covering a part of the article to be stolen—	
Barwars do so	43
Steamer ghâts, theft at, <i>see</i> Barwars.	
Stones thrown during dacoity—	
Bhumis do so	5
Lodhas do so	18
<i>Sutari</i> , cattle poisoning by— <i>see</i> Chhattisgarh Chamars ...	60
Swallowing counterfet coin in possession—	
Chhapparbands may do so, if arrested	63
Swindling—	
Form of—practised by Byadhs	7
By the finding of gold mohurs	<i>ib.</i>
By <i>Lakshmi's bhar</i> trick	<i>ib.</i>
By doubling trick	<i>ib.</i>
Practised by Baid Musalmans	37
Bead—practised by Magahiya Dom women	70
By <i>bala</i> trick by Muzaffarpur Sonars	98
By <i>tapka</i> trick by —————	101
Practised by Chain Chamar women	65
—————Jadua Brahmins	77
<i>Tapka</i> Trick	101
Tattooing—	
Of face and arms by Dhekaru women	<i>ib.</i>
—————by Minka women	94
Of face by Marwari Bauriya women	47
Teeth—Adorning with gold, Dhekarus	12
Tools—	
Carried by Bhampta thieves	52
House-breaking—used by Chhattisgarh Chamars	59
—————are worshipped by Dharhis	66
Train thefts. <i>See</i> Bhamptas, Barwars, Sanaurhiyas, Kepmaris	49, 42, 102, 84
Tuntia Musalmans—	
Abode of—	20
Crime committed by—	20
Cries of "Machi ghono, jal gutao" used by—	22
<i>Dkenki</i> used by—in committing dacoity	21

	PAGE.
Tuntia Musalmans—	
Do not use unnecessary violence	21
Divide booty immediately after occurrence	<i>ib.</i>
Field of criminal operation of—	20
Imitate howling of jackals	22
<i>Modus operandi</i> of—	21
Occupation of—	19
Origin of—	<i>ib.</i>
Social status of—	19
Some gangs of—have come under the Criminal Tribes Act	22
Weapons used in committing dacoity—	
Spears, <i>tangis</i> , swords, etc., used by the Bhumij	5
<i>Lathis</i> used by Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis	26
Axes used by Bhurs	58
Sacrificial knives sometimes used by Chhoto Bhagiya Muchis	26





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